

The Reason for the Walls and other tales

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Summary: History is often warped by time and memory. People give Godric, Helga, Rowena, and Salazar the credit for founding Hogwarts. But they had to have a reason for such a huge undertaking. Meet Hiccup Slytherin, Jack Ravenclaw, Merida Gryffindor, and Rapunzel Hufflepuff. Now including various oneshots with the Big Four at Hogwarts.

1. The Eight

"Get back here right now, Hiccup!"

"Dad, Toothless isn't going to wait."

"I don't care, it's too risky. What if someone sees you?"

Hiccup sighed. "Dad, what's the use of having a dragon for a friend if we can't go flying? And I fly above the clouds. No one catches me up there."

"I know, and I thank you for taking precautions." Salazar sighed, a wearier one than his son's, "But there aren't any clouds today. Look!" He pointed out the window of the dilapidated castle at the clear blue sky. "I'm sorry, but you can't go flying today. You'll have to wait for nightfall."

"Can I at least go see him, to tell him I'm alright? He worries." Hiccup looked up at his father. It was a long ways. Sometimes he wished the man wasn't so tall.

"Yes, but do not let anyone hear you. If someone found outâ€¦well, I don't need to remind you about what happened last time."

Hiccup shuddered. No, he did not. The boy was in the doorway when he turned back and looked at his father. The man sighed again. He seemed to be doing that a lot these days. "What else?"

"Thank you." And Hiccup slid through the doorway of the crumbling keep, through the ruins of the rest of the town and into the woods where his friend waited.

Salazar Slytherin grinned. It was good to know that all the trouble they'd been through had not changed his son's kind heart. He knew very few children appreciated what their fathers did for them.

* * *

><p>"Mother,"<p>

Helga looked down at her hand and back at her chastising daughter. "It's just a scratch, dear. Can't tend roses without being bitten by a few thorns."

But Rapunzel wasn't buying it. She grabbed Helga by the shoulders and sat her down on one of smaller rocks at the foot of the boulder wall that shielded the garden from prying eyes. Then she proceeded to scold. "You should wear the gloves I made you." She drew the pin out of the massive bun on her head, picked up the end of her impossibly long braid of hair and began winding it around the injured hand.

But Helga pushed Rapunzel away and scolded in turn, sounding exactly like her daughter. "We can't do that in the open. You know what happened last time." She reached up and brushed back the small lock of brown hair sticking out of her daughter's braid. "Dear, your gift is too valuable to waste on a little scratch. Now help me with the weeds and I'll take the cuttings back to the village. I hear Lady Gryffindor wants new roses for the castle."

So Mrs. Hufflepuff and Ms. Hufflepuff finished pulling out the green interlopers and dragged their baskets of rose clippings back to the house to bag up the roots.

* * *

><p>Godric was in the middle of entertaining his three sons when his daughter burst through the doors. "I did it, Dad!"<p>

He stopped his storytelling for a moment. "Did what?"

She giggled. "I made an arrow float, just like you showed me!" She ran towards him and threw her arms around his massive bulk in a hug. "Now we can try bigger things, like you promised! You can teach me how to make a sword float!"

"Godric," his wife called from across the table, "I thought we agreed to stop the magic lessons until we could find a suitable teacher."

He huffed. "I don't see a reason to keep her from it. The lassie is gifted. And we don't need a tutor when it's just her. I can teach her."

Eleanor sighed. "Your magic always involves fighting. She should be learning to heal, using her abilities for a lady's duties, not using them on her weapons. A lady should not have weapons, in my opinion."

"She's got to be able to defend herself. If she's going to get in trouble for that gift o' hers, she should at least know a few things about fighting with it."

Eleanor won many arguments concerning their daughter Merida, but this was one she always lost. Godric did not see the point in hiding something so unnatural, probably because it was from his side of the family and the reason he was lord.

Well, there were always other things she could teach Merida.

* * *

><p>Rowena woke up covered in snow. An immediate frown covered her face. She yelled "Jackson!"<p>

The culprit came down off the rafters and hovered above his mother. "Well it's hot outside. I thought you might appreciate a little cool air." The smirk belied the sweet words.

She blew her frazzled hair out of her eyes and gave her son the eyebrow. "That would be true, if not for the fact that you've done this every day this week. That's it, I'm grounding you. Hand over the staff."

He pouted. "But don't you want to see the new trick I learned?"

As much as she loved exploring new magic, she had to be firm or he'd walk all over her. "You can show me when you're not grounded. Now hand it over." He relinquished the staff, but not before covering her in snow again. "Jackson Ravenclaw, you thaw me right now!"

He chuckled from the rafters where he'd perched. "But you look so cute as a snowman."

She shook herself to loosen the snow. "Honestly, you'd think I wasn't your mother with how much respect I get. You won't even stay where I can see you when I'm talking to you."

She mumbled the last part, but Jack still heard it and replied with a mumble of his own. "Well, maybe I would, if you paid attention when I was talking instead of getting all focused on your latest spell. Sometimes I feel invisible to you, and you're my mother."

But Rowena Ravenclaw didn't notice. She was too busy using a new combination of spells to hold her hair away from her face. Jack gave her one more look and flew out the window and into the woods. Rowena never noticed that both the staff and her son were missing for most of the day.

I'm back! By the way, I have no idea how to classify this, so I'm just going to use my favorite of the five (yes, five) different sources for this. I welcome reviews, PMs, and any questions you may have for me.

2. Snow and Scales

Jack didn't go home when the sun set. Why bother? It wasn't like his

mother would look up from her cauldron or spell records long enough to tuck him in. It felt like he wasn't even there when he was at home, and since it was either that or the sky, he preferred the sky. His staff made sure he could enjoy every moment of it.

His staff was very special, another of his mother's experiments. She'd engraved the Latin words of the rising spell, *_Wingardeum Leviosa_* into the handle and added a weather charm for good measure. The result was a stick that, if you sat astride it, would let you fly. It was one of the only things his mother had given him. Well, that and his ice powers.

Something swooshed by him in the clouds, close enough for the wind currents to brush him slightly off balance on his staff. This was begging to be investigated. Jack followed the trail of wind ripples easily because of their size. When something flew through the air, it disturbed the wind and air around it. Whatever had passed Jack had to be pretty big to leave such an obvious wind trail. He was about to land in one of the forest clearings when he heard a growl. Quickly, he dove for the foliage of one of the trees and peeked through the leaves.

There was no mistaking it. There was a dragon in that clearing. It wasn't very big, about the size of a full grown bear, that is if you didn't count the wings or the tail. Jack couldn't see how big the wings were because the animal had them tightly furled against its sides, but the tail was long and had what looked like fins on either side. He seemed focused on something in front of him, so he wasn't paying attention to Jack. That had probably already saved his life, if his mom's ramblings were true and the beast could actually spit fire. He didn't know. He'd never seen one before, but the combination of wings and scales glinting in the moonlight was pretty convincing.

He should have flown off that minute, before the dragon saw him. But what was so interesting that it could hold the beast's attention when there was other prey nearby? It was a little scary to think of himself as prey, especially since this was one thing he couldn't just fly away from. But he must have inherited his curiosity from his mother, because he couldn't quiet the want to know. Slowly, Jack eased himself back into the sky and over to the other side of the clearing.

It was a boy. The dragon's whole attention was fixed on the boy in front of it, who seemed to be growling at it. Was the boy stupid, or just plain crazy? He wanted to tell the other boy to run, get away, but then he noticed something. When the boy growled, the dragon responded. Was heâ€|talking to it?

No way. Come on, a kid who can talk to dragons was about as likely asâ€|someone controlling the snow. And hey, he was around, so it was entirely possible that the boy in the clearing could actually talk to the animal. Who was he to judge?

He must have leaned a little too far forward, because he fell rather noisily out of the tree. He searched for the clearing with his eyes, expecting the beast to come charging at him any moment. Instead, he saw the other boy, now frantic, hop onto its back. The pair took off into the sky with a leap.

Thank goodness Jack still had his staff. He slung one leg over it and let it rocket forward after the strange pair.

They led him on an incredible chase, full of steep dives that nearly crashed into the landscape below and several turns that would have knocked him off his staff if he hadn't been a bit of a daredevil himself and worked those turns until they were perfected. But this kid was an excellent flyer, and Jack could only imagine the kind of power that dragon had to have to pull some of those moves off. He had to catch this kid, if only to have someone else to talk to. Hopefully he didn't just speak in growls.

Then, just as Jack entered the cloud cover in pursuit of the pair, something knocked into the back of his head and he fell unconscious. His last thought was that he was falling.

* * *

><p>Hiccup caught the boy after diving past him to get a good hit on the back of his head. He was worried. I think this guy heard me talking to Toothless. Oh, Dad's gonna kill me. And we just got here too. Maybe the blow had been enough to give the kid memory loss.

Then again, he'd kept up well. In the sky. Maybe he had a pet Changewing or something. It would be nice to have another dragon-type Parselmouth kid to talk to. Hey, they could swap tips about how to hide their abilities.

Hiccup let a wry grin sneak over his face. Yeah right. If this got out, they'd probably end up being run out of town, again. Was there anywhere left on this stupid island?

Toothless landed and Hiccup threw a growled thanks over his shoulder as he laid the other boy down on the grass. This kid didn't look quite as scraggly as Hiccup, but that white hair really stood out. Maybe there was something worth hiding about this kid. Perhaps Hiccup could make him keep the secret, a sort of I'm-in-the-same-position-as-you thing.

The extreme blond shook his head as he woke up. "Where am I? What happened?" Hiccup bent over him, checking for blood or any other signs of damage. He had hit the kid pretty hard, after all. Then the boy came to his senses and grabbed the front of Hiccup's shirt. "You were talking to that dragon."

Hiccup didn't move.

"Can you do other stuff too?"

"Like what?" the brunette asked.

"Like this." And suddenly both of them were covered in a thin blanket of snow. Hiccup had gotten his wish.

Jack was just as weird as him, and his father would not kill him for tonight.

****Second chapter is up! Please Review!****

****I hope you like what I did with Jack's staff. If someone guesses the plans I have, I'll give an internet smoothie.****

****I spent two hours yesterday looking for a picture of the Hogwarts four that wasn't formal and couldn't find a thing. Would anyone like to draw some cover art for me? Please?****

3. Red and Gold

Merida rocketed out of bed, slipped into her dress, grabbed her bow, and mounted Angus before waking was an idea in her father's head. This was one of the only days she didn't have lessons or royal obligations and she wasn't going to waste it. First, she rode along the target path she'd made without her mother's knowledge and made every shot, even the devilishly tricky one where she had to shoot backwards just as Angus leapt over a fallen log, only a breath after the shot into the hollow tree. But she hit it with ease. Yes, today was a good day.

She and Angus halted at the clearing where the path ended and Merida pulled map out of her boot. She had plans for today, involving the Crone's Tooth and the Fire Falls. She checked her position against the sun's and headed off westward, towards the mountain that contained the day's challenge.

The climb was not an easy one. There were a few times when her hand slipped and she used her gift to give her other hand extra grip while she scouted for a more secure hold with the other one. She did the same when her right foot lost its grip halfway up, although that was slightly scarier. But, thanks to what her father called magic and her mother called unladylike, Merida reached the top of the formation and danced on the top for a moment, celebrating her victory. Then the sound of falling water reminded her of the other reason she'd made the climb, besides the need for a challenge.

The Fire Falls.

Cautiously, she reached out her cupped hands and felt the falling water pelt the skin as a single gulp gathered in her curved palms. She drew her hands away from the falls and drank the water, letting the legendary fire course through her. Then she laughed to the sky and twirled on top of the fixture, letting the daring of her actions make her giddy.

She took one last look over the land around her before moving to the edge, but stopped when she saw something odd. It was a ring of boulders out in the forest, protecting what looked like a flower garden. Well, she was feeling adventurous. She pulled her map out of her boot, marked the direction, and began the climb back down. Once she reached the bottom, she mounted Angus again, checked the direction he'd written onto the map, and rode off in the direction of the walled garden.

Line Break

Rapunzel finished twining her braid around her head, pinned it in place, and headed out to the garden to do the early watering. It took a full hour each morning to twine the yards of braid around her head so that it didn't fall over her face and didn't hurt her neck. But

once it was out of the way, she didn't have to think about it for the rest of the day. No, then she only had to worry about the accidental magic that sometimes slipped out while she was gardening.

She grabbed the watering can from its place beside the door of their little cottage and brought it to the pump. After a few minutes of working the handle, the can was full and she began walking around the walled garden, watering each of the bushes. Her mother would be up in a few hours to help her tend them. Her trips to the castle always wore on her, especially since she worried about Rapunzel while she was gone. Discovery was a constant worry.

_I jinxed myself, _thought the blonde as she heard someone else in the garden. She looked around, frantically trying to hide a plant big enough to hide behind, but she'd finished with the bigger rose bushes and was in the herb section. There was nowhere to hide!

The footsteps and swaying of a skirt got closer and the girl's attempts to conceal herself increased. Finally the girl just dove between the rows, hoping the person, whoever it was, wouldn't think to look there.

"What're you doing down there?" She'd been caught. But wait, the voice was young and it sounded like a girl. Maybe she could keep her from suspecting anything.

The other girl got up and brushed herself off, wincing at the state her hair must be in. Great. It took ages to wash on a regular day, but with dirt in it? That would take a millennium. She looked up at the other girl.

Well, it's nice to know I'm not the only one with hair problems. The girl's face was almost hidden in a mass of unruly red curls. The girl's face was also looking straight at her, expecting an answer. "Oh, umâ€¦" Rapunzel searched for a good lie. "I was looking for whisps." _Great job, Rapunzel. She's really gonna believe those things exist. Why couldn't you say something more believable, like you tripped? _

But to her surprise, the girl jumped up and clapped her hands. "I knew I couldn't be the only one looking for them! Have you seen them before?"

Okay, that had not been what she was expecting. "No." The girl visibly deflated in front of her. "But I do believe in them."

The redhead perked up at that. "Really? I got to see one once, right before I found out I could do this." She brought out an arrow and made it hover in midair. "My mother says I got the gift from them, but Dad can do it to so maybe I got it from him." Then her face darkened, as if she'd just remembered something. "They'll be worried about me, I didna tell them where I was goin'. I'll see you laterâ€¦umâ€¦"

"Rapunzel." The blonde answered with a smile. "My name is Rapunzel."

The other girl held out her hand. "I'm Merida." She grabbed the blonde's hand and gave it a vigorous shake. "Merida Gryffindor. But I've got to go now, so I'll see you later, Rapunzel!" And just like

that, her friend was back over the wall but not out of Rapunzel's thoughts.

****And the girls make their appearance. How am I doing with keeping them in character?****

****By the way, just because their parent is the founder of a certain house doesn't mean they have those personality traits.****

****Please Review!****

4. A Race

"No, I can't." Hiccup couldn't believe it. Why was this kid so open about his powers? Didn't he know what would happen if he got caught? "I mean, I can make Toothless and me invisible, but talking to Toothless is really what I'm good at. How about you?"

The white-blond shrugged. "I can control ice and snow and stuff, but not much else. My mom never showed me anything else." He looked down at the ground.

Hiccup's eyes joined his. "Yeah. Dad only taught me those spells to help me hide Toothless."

"At least your parents taught you something."

"Parent, actually." Hiccup bit his lip. He still felt sad about that. "It's just me and Dad."

"You too?" The brunette looked up and met the other boy's blue eyes.

He nodded in reply. "My mom got killed by a mob that was trying to get to me." He stopped talking after that, something Jack was glad for. He didn't do emotional well, he was much better at having fun and causing trouble, something he thought his new friend needed right then.

"You want to race?" He saw the kid's head come up at stare at him. But the tears were gone from those eyes, oh yes, they were gone.

Fire hot enough to melt his ice was blazing in those pupils. "Just try to keep up." And without another word, he'd jumped on the back of his dragon and with a single pump of those massive black wings, he was in the air.

Jack screamed a "No fair, getting a head start!" and shot into the sky after the other teen. Once he was level with the dragon, he used his powers to cool the air just under the dragon's right wing. The duo lost the lift on that side and tipped in that direction before giving a hearty flap and leveling themselves again. The brunette glared at the staff rider.

Jack innocently asked, "Where did that cold breeze come from?" Hiccup just rolled his eyes and leaned forward, reducing his wind resistance and rocketing forward again. Jack did the same, locking his feet around the crooked end of his staff and leaning so far forward he was

practically lying on top of the slim rod. The dragon boy wouldn't lose him that easily.

Hiccup glanced over his shoulder at the blond. He was keeping up quite nicely. Tricks were in order. He whispered to Toothless in Dragonese, "What do you think? Should we dive?" The dragon tossed his head in answer and folded his wings, starting the plummet that so often gave the friends a rush. Hiccup spared a glance back and saw that Jack was falling behind a little, but not as much as he would have expected. The kid had guts to follow him on a dive this steep. The pair pulled up about ten feet above the tree line and started flying more leisurely.

Jack caught up and glided beside them. He adjusted his posture so that he was standing upright with one foot in the crook and holding the staff perpendicular to the ground. "You dive often?" he remarked, not showing his slight awe at the boy's skill.

His companion grinned and the dragon beneath him smirked, or at least that was what he meant. "It's one of our best tricks, although free falling is more fun."

Jack started. "You free fall?"

"Sure. You've never tried it?"

Jack looked at the staff in his hands. "I don't think I could."

Hiccup smiled at the boy, but it fell quickly when he saw the lightening sky. "Oh gods, I am so late! Dad's gonna kill me."

He jumped back on Toothless and started buckling himself in when Jack grabbed his hand. "Can we do this again sometime?"

Hiccup shook his head. "I can't. No one is supposed to know about me and Toothless. If my dad finds out, Da da da, I'm dead." Jack laughed at the joking tone. "But it was fun."

But Jack wasn't going to let go. "If we can both do magic, our parents won't kill us for knowing each other. Why not meet up again?"

Hiccup thought about that for a moment. He'd been thinking the exact same thing before Jack woke up. "Maybe," he speculated, "We should introduce them. I'll bring my dad tomorrow, and you bring your mom. Okay?"

Jack laughed and replied, "Sure. What could go wrong?" Hiccup grinned at the heavy sarcasm. "So, should we meet up here?"

"No, it's too close to the town. Do you know where the old ruins are?"

"Yeah, I go exploring there all the time." Mom also went there to get ingredients for her experiments, although they hadn't gone in a while.

"We just moved in. There's a field about half a mile from the keep that we can use." Plus the place was well hidden and easy to get away

from if this turned out to be a trap. Dad would be proud of the choice.

"Yeah, I know that field." He grinned. "It makes a great ice skating rink."

Hiccup laughed outright at that. "Just don't freeze my dad. He's about as cold blooded as a dragon." Jack laughed along with him and both boys flew off in the direction of their respective parents. Jack didn't think he'd have any trouble getting his mom to the meet-up, as long as he mentioned the part about speaking to dragons. She wouldn't be able to resist.

_Should I tell my dad that I got discovered, _Hiccup thought on the way back to the ruins. _No, I can't. He'd hurt Jack But maybe I can say that I found someone like me. That'll get his attention._

On his way back, Hiccup flew past the Fire Falls and landed on top of the Crone's Tooth for a quick drink. He flew off after he and his dragon had slaked their thirst, not knowing about the two green eyes that had watched them the whole time. Helga Hufflepuff had worked hard to hide her daughter from the people of this land, and she wasn't about to let some tribe of the sky find her. She grabbed her short sword, left a note for Rapunzel telling her she'd gone to find new seeds, and headed in the direction of the dragon's flight path.

****Things are starting to come together now for the four. Please review and tell me what you think!****

5. Talking

She followed the airborne figure through the mountains and forest, alternating her gaze between the steadily lightening sky and the ground beneath her feet. When the dragon began descending, the woman dove behind part of a wall. She inspected her cover for a moment and gave her surroundings a closer look. She was inside a ruined castle set on the edge of a cliff. It would have been beautiful once, but now held the luster of things that had once been. Still, it had once been great.

The dragon landed in the middle of what would have been a courtyard and the boy riding it dismounted. Helga inspected him for a moment. Small, but riding that dragon couldn't be easy. He probably had a considerable amount of muscle. Then he let out a growl and the beast next to him replied with one. Could this boy talk to dragons?

If he could, that made him even more dangerous. What if the dragon saw Rapunzel while he was flying and told the boy? Her daughter would be gone within the day. No, these two had to go. The two separated, the dragon heading for the woods and the boy walking towards the only intact structure, the keep. As he slipped through the door, Helga gathered her cloak in her hands to keep it from billowing out and darted from her hiding place and ran to the next bit of cover, the bottom section of a collapsed support beam. She rushed from cover to cover, nearing the doorway until she was close enough to listen to the conversation inside.

"Dad, I kinda found someone while I was out flying." The boy's voice

was high, but not clear like a young boy's voice. It had already changed, which meant the boy was probably in his teens. Had he already found Rapunzel?

"Did they see you?" This voice was deeper, but had the same nasally tone. The boy's father, then. It might be difficult to take out both of them.

"No, Dad, it's fine. But it'sâ€¦well, I think he might be like me." Okay, the boy saw a male, most likely another boy. Not Rapunzel, then. Still, this sounded interesting. She kept listening.

Apparently, the father wanted to know more too. "Another Parselmouth?"

"Not exactly." She could almost imagine him scratching at the back of his head, looking sheepish. "But I did see him make the ground frost before he took off flying."

"Flying?" Could there be others out there like her daughter? "Did he have a dragon?"

"I don't know." The boy conceded. "I flew off the same time he did. I didn't want him to notice me. But I think I can find him again."

"And why would you want to do that?" the father cautioned.

"Well, people like us should stick together. Safety in numbers, right? And we can teach each other stuff, like the cloaking spells you taught me for night flight. Maybe then we wouldn't have to hide so much." Helga mulled the idea over in her head. Would it work? If they all had something to hide, they wouldn't reveal each other's secrets. And the shared information would be beneficial as well, especially things pertaining to concealment.

"Where do you think this boy would be?" Helga wanted to know too.

"A field half a mile away smelled a lot like him. Toothless told me. I think he goes there every night to fly." That field was excellent for gathering Lenten Roses, Autumn Crocus, and other cold weather plants.

"Alright. We'll go tomorrow night, but at the first sign of hostility, I want you to get on Toothless and get out of there. Deal?"

"Deal." Helga left her listening post and headed back into the forest.

It wasn't the first time she'd met people who claimed to be different. She'd met fortune tellers, magicians, and all sorts of supposedly magical people at the castle and on the roads to it. Her husband had met many of them while searching for something to save her and Rapunzel when she fell ill carrying her. She'd never thought of revealing herself and Rapunzel to any of them. So what made this pair different.

Could it be their shared circumstances? She and her daughter lived

away from civilization in an effort to hide her gift, and it seemed that the father was trying to do the same for his son. His son did have something. He wouldn't need to hide if he didn't. So maybe as Parselmouth, as the man had called it, he wouldn't immediately jump to conclusions about her daughter. He hadn't about that other boy.

The other boy. She'd forgotten all about him! What if he saw Rapunzel? Helga immediately ceased her attempts to be stealthy and began running. She knew nothing about that other boy except that he could fly. The enclosed garden was open to the sky. Her legs could not move fast enough.

She quickly unlatched the gate to the garden and saw Rapunzel dutifully tending the herb section. "Rapunzel, get back inside the cottage," commanded the older woman as she took the watering can from her daughter and pushed her in the direction of the small building.

"But the roses," the blonde gestured limply in their direction.

"Leave them to me. You get back inside." She smiled at her daughter reassuringly. "Don't worry, I'll look after the garden."

Satisfied, the girl slipped back through the doorway and into the small house. Helga released a breath she hadn't known she was holding. Now she just had to keep Rapunzel out of sight until she could crash the meeting that night and get a feel for her magical neighbors. If they didn't seem to be a threat, she'd introduce her daughter, but not a second before she had that knowledge.

Rapunzel didn't like this at all. First she woke up to find her mother gone, then the minute she showed up again, it was back into the house for her. She didn't even get to water the perennial blossoms! She cracked the door open and saw her mother staring at the sky as if she expected something to swoop down out of it. That settled it. She was not letting her mother out of her sight.

When darkness was grabbing hold of the sky, a man and his son mounted a black dragon and flew to a clearing that iced over as the boy touched down and let his mother off the back of the staff. A woman hid in the bushes nearby, not knowing that she was also being watched by a girl from the treetops. But the wisps knew.

How did you like the way I staged the conversation between Hiccup and Salazar? Does it get the feeling across even though it's through Helga's perspective? Did you think her presence there made sense?

Please Review!

6. All Together

Godric had taken Merida into the forest to do a little skill testing. He spelled an arrow with a glow spell so that it emitted a faint green light and handed it to his daughter. "Now lassie, I want you to send this arrow as far away as you can." She grabbed for her weapon. "No, not with your bow. With your magic."

Merida grinned at her father. He always loved watching her use her magic, especially the hover trick she'd first learned. She took the glowing red arrow from her father and levitated it above her open right palm. The magic pooled in her hand until she could feel it heating up. When the burn became almost painful, she released the magic and, by extension, the arrow. It flew out of the clearing and almost out of sight, if not for the red glow. Merida grinned at her father, almost dancing. "Did you, did you see that? Did you?"

He lifted her up in an enormous bear hug and pulled her tight. "Yes, my wee darling. Now let's go find it." The two wild redheads barreled through the underbrush for what seemed like only seconds but were more like fifteen minutes. They found the luminescent arrow sticking out of the trunk of a tree, the head buried all the way in the wood. "You see that, lass?" The girl nodded. "It might have gone a league if not for the forest." He jostled her affectionately. "You're gonna be just like your dad." Merida laughed, but cut off the sound when she saw something ahead of her.

It was a tiny cloud of blue shaped like a teardrop, with two arms that made a 'come here' motion. "Dad, look. It's a will-o-the-wisp!" She whispered to her father. She walked towards the small blue entity, but when she got within reach, it vanished.

"Stars, lass, do you know what this means?" Godric breathed as he saw a path of the blue spirits wind through the forest.

"We've got to follow them!" Merida almost squealed. She began running after the wisps, father in tow. They ran through the forest, stopping occasionally to find the next wisp, and both ruining their clothes to a degree that would have Eleanor in tears when they returned. But neither cared. They were the brave Gryffindor clan, and adventure was at the end of the wisp-laden path.

The wisps ceased laying a trail at the edge of a clearing. The two redheads approached with more caution now, peering into the field through the bushes. A sudden burst of cold hit them as the ground beneath their feet frosted over, accompanied by a strong wind from the center of the clearing. Slowly, the two crept further forward until they were almost visible in an attempt to gain a better idea of what was going on.

Rewarding the pair, something swooped out of the sky and landed in the clearing. One was much bigger than the other, and from the looks of it was a winged animal of sorts, before the glistening scales gave it away. Two figures appeared beside the beast and Godric realized what he was looking at. "Dragon riders," he whispered to the lass beside him. "I didn't think we had any here."

Then another unidentified object landed in the clearing, much smaller than the previous one. It separated into two people, one with a large staff with a crook at the end. But before the two groups could come any closer to each other, the dragon sniffed the air and growled something. The smaller figure who had been riding him stood straighter and spoke in a low voice to the other man who'd arrived with him. "So you thought you could ambush us?" The man roared at the other pair.

The boy with hair so white it was distinguishable even at this

distance stumbled back. "What are you talking about?"

The man advanced on the other boy. "You, your supposed mother, and four others hiding in the bushes behind you. Do you think us stupid?"

"What? But-"

"Toothless smelled them. Now call them off or there will be consequences." Toothless readied a bright blue plasma blast.

Then a woman stumbled out of the bushes with her hands raised. "I'm sorry. I'm not here to hurt you." Not if he was willing to hurt others to keep his son a secret. Yes, Helga would give the two dragon riders a chance at least. The other pair was still under suspicion.

"Then why are you here?" The man's voice boomed out over the clearing. "And who are the other three?"

Well, if Mother had revealed herself, she would too. Mother knew best, after all. Rapunzel looped the end of her braid over a far tree branch and swung into the clearing. "I'm her daughter. I'm not here to hurt you."

"Rapunzel, what are you doing here?" Helga grabbed her daughter's hand. "I told you to stay inside!"

"I know you!" A girl with the wildest mop of red curls any of them had ever seen popped out of the bushes with a finger pointed at the blonde girl. The other blond gripped his staff and aimed it in the newcomer's direction. She proceeded to ignore him. "Did the wisps lead you here too?"

Toothless finally got tired of sitting around in the dark and lit up a patch of ground with a medium sized blast. Salazar looked over to where the last of the interlopers was standing and saw the burly figure behind her. "You!"

The big man was obviously just as startled as Hiccup's father. "Salazar, I didn't expect to see you here. How've you been, you big tussy?"

"Fine, Godric," replied the dragon rider, brushing down his robes. "I see your daughter has the same amount of poise that you possess."

The Gryffindor had the sense to look sheepish. "Merida's still in her princess training period." Then he stood straight again as a thought popped into his head. "Is that your son?"

The boy moved forward, letting the light outline his slight figure and color those brilliant green eyes. "Yes. My name is Hiccup Slytherin. What is yours?"

The big man walked forward and extended one meaty hand. "Godric Gryffindor, and my daughter Merida." He shook the younger's hand and turned to the other two pairs. "And who might you be?"

With the tension dissolved, Jack now felt safe enough to introduce

himself and his mother, whose attention was wholly focused on the dragon. Well, he had promised her a dragon. "I'm Jack Ravenclaw and this is my mother Rowena. Excuse her, please." He hoped that didn't offend anyone.

He stepped into the light at about the same time as the woman and her daughter. "My name is Helga Hufflepuff." She lowered her hood and a respectable length of brown hair spilled over her shoulders, though nowhere near as long as her daughters.

"I'm Rapunzel. It's nice to meet you." Her smile made it very difficult to be wary around her.

None of them had any idea what they were about to embark on.

****Now everyone's finally together. Happy?****

****I may have to change my updates schedule to every other day. I'm swapping rooms with my brother, have a friend who I will not see for possibly a year staying over, and have less than two weeks to find a new job. That said, I will try my hardest not to need that different schedule. So encouragement is welcome.****

****Review!****

7. How Did You Get Here?

Merida stared down her father. "And how is it that you just happen to know two dragon riders?"

The big man shrank before her accusatory glare. "Well, lassie, I had to learn my skills somewhere, and my teacher had two pupils."

"I was also learning magic at the time," added the more dignified figure of Hiccup's father. He seemed to be making an effort to distinguish himself from the other man. "We learned together for a time before Godric's family removed him from the mage training to become a warrior. However," He looked at the two older women seated by the fire, courtesy of Toothless, "As much as Godric is inclined to leaping before he looks, I would like to know what brought the two of you here tonight." His hand drifted towards the hilt of his small dagger.

Helga was the first to answer. "Well, I came, mostly because of what I heard the other day." She blushed a little. "I saw your son flying and followed him to the ruins where you were staying. I-"

"Why were you following him?" Salazar interrupted, a bit harshly.

She drew back and irritation colored her next words. "I thought he'd seen my daughter and was going to hurt her." Salazar deflated. "I followed him to the ruins so that, if you and he were planning to attack us and hurt Rapunzel, I could stop you. When I heard about this meeting instead, I decided I needed to know more before taking action, so I spied on you. And here we are. But," she threw a look in her daughter's direction. "I didn't think she would follow me after I specifically told her to stay inside."

Hiccup flinched. He knew that look all too well. "I didn't see her."

"Be that as it may," the woman continued, "I still had to ensure that you wouldn't be a threat."

"Believe me, I understand completely." Salazar opened his palms to the group. "I fear for Hiccup the same way. It's one of the reasons we chose those ruins instead of the town. Now that I see who was leading it," He shot Godric a barely concealed glare, "I'm glad we did. But what about the two of you?" He looked at Jack and his now-attentive mother. "How did you know about this?"

To his surprise, both the blond and his son flinched. "Actually, we planned it," Hiccup admitted. "I wanted you to meet Jack, so that we wouldn't be alone all the time."

"When did you do this?"

The blond spoke up. "Last night, after we raced each other. It was so much fun that we wanted to do it again, and things just kind of ran from there." He twirled his hand and began forming a snowball. "I thought it would be fun."

"You let someone see you?" roared Salazar at his son.

"No, I snuck up on him," Jack defended. "He tried to lose me, but I kept up. We talked, and since neither of us had friends we decided to meet up again. It was Hiccup's idea to bring our parents. We had no idea about the others, though."

Salazar glared at the woman beside the boy. "Why did you come?"

"Well, when Jack told me he'd found a dragon, I couldn't resist coming over to study it. I'd like to study all of you, actually." Everyone jumped into action. Godric began yelling about Rowena trying to steal military secrets, Helga sprang to her feet and began tugging her daughter in the direction of the bushes, and Hiccup was pulled towards Toothless by his father's free hand. The other was occupied by his drawn sword.

Jack shot him a please-help-me look. Hiccup rolled his eyes and growled to Toothless. The big animal roared, quieting Godric and halting both the Hufflepuff duo and his father. Jack began to plead his case. "She doesn't want to study you so she can hurt you. She just likes to learn, it's all she ever does." Did Rapunzel detect a bit of resentment in that statement? "Please, come back and sit down so we can figure this out."

"What is there to figure out?" accused Helga as she continued pulling her daughter in the direction of the bushes.

"How we're going to deal with each other," Hiccup chimed in.

"We don't need to deal with each other. You just need to stay away from my land," growled Godric, "especially you," and he pointed at Salazar.

"But that would be such a waste!" Exclaimed Ms. Ravenclaw. "Think of

what we could learn from each other!"

That caught everyone's attention. Jack and Hiccup mentally high-fived each other. Jack nodded his head in Hiccup's direction, signaling for him to speak. He obliged. "Yes! Dad taught me concealment spells that I could teach Rapunzel, and I'm sure she knows something she could teach me."

Helga had stopped trying to get away and was listening intently from her place at the edge of the clearing. Then Rapunzel walked past her and back into the light of the dragon fire. "I know about a lot of plants, some of them magical. I can teach you about them. What about you?" She looked at the redheaded girl. "Do you think we should try?"

She shrugged. "I'm up for it, if ya don't mind me teaching you about firing arrows with magic."

Hiccup flinched, but Jack perked up. "Do you think that could work on other objects?" Now Hiccup was paying attention.

She smiled at the other boy. "Sure! I haven't tried, but it could. Want me to show you?"

"Not right now," chided the other redhead. "It's getting late and we have duties to attend tomorrow. Best if we go home now, lassie."

"Wait," Hiccup asked. "When will we meet up again?"

"How about night after tomorrow?" offered Rapunzel. "We can meet every other night."

"I won't be able to get away that often," commented Godric. "We'll have to think of something else."

"We don't need to all work around your schedule, Godric," Salazar sneered. "Your daughter can come by herself. No need for you to tag along every time."

"Actually, that's not a bad idea." Hiccup added. "Rapunzel, Merida, Jack and me can come every other night and parents come when they can. That way Rowena can study us and the others," he gestured to the other parents, "can check our progress. Sound good?"

The others nodded. "Then let's all get home," said Godric, taking charge yet again. "I'll send Merida out here night after next." And the pair ran back into the bushes.

"It was nice to meet the two of you," Rapunzel said politely to the two boys. "I'll see you night after tomorrow." Then her mother grabbed her hand and finally succeeded in dragging her out of the clearing.

Hiccup turned to Jack. "Well, that could have been worse."

"Could have been better too." Hiccup frowned while Jack smiled. "I'm kidding. See you in a few." And he and his mom mounted their odd stickâ€¦thing and flew off.

His mother was muttering the whole way. "Six other wizards in the same place and I didn't notice it! I'll have to work harder on that detection spell."

Back in the clearing, Salazar turned to his son and gave him a _look_. The boy cringed. "Sorry."

Then the man's face lightened and gave a rare smile. "I'm glad you found friends who accept you and can help you. Even if one of them is Godric's daughter." He gave his son a one-armed hug around the shoulders. "But we should be heading back. With that, the duo mounted Toothless and flew back to their home in the ruins.

Well, what did you think of the conclusion of their first true meeting altogether? Was it forced at all? Did I keep everyone in character? And chapters seem to be getting longer now, bet you guys like that.

Please Review! The third person to do so gets to here about the first project I have planned for the kids.

8. Mothers

The next morning, Merida woke to the sound of her mother's voice.

And she was angry.

"What were you doing taking Merida out of the castle at night? I was so worried? What could you have been doing?" Oh, Dad was getting it now. But they had gotten back pretty late thanks to that meeting. Merida slipped into her favorite green dress and slip down the stairway's rail to get a better view of the shouting match.

Queen Eleanor stood in front of her husband, hands on hips and towering over a seated Godric. Fully arrayed in her more elegant green dress, crown placed on her immaculate hair, she completely dwarfed the big man who currently was curled up in his chair trying to shield himself from his wife's wrath. Merida giggled. It wasn't every day her mother shouted at someone besides her.

But Godric decided he'd had enough abuse for one day. "We were meeting with other magic users."

The queen's posture relaxed slightly, a sign that the fire and brimstone had cooled somewhat. "Oh? And what were you discussing?"

Godric uncurled from his chair and straightened his spine. "We were talking about sharing what we know."

"Like what?"

Godric jolted as she turned a suddenly suspicious eye on him. "Well, there's spells for concealment, one worked with plants, and the other girl liked to learn about things." Then he remembered their discussion from a few days before. "Merida might learn things more suited to her role as princess."

The king breathed a sigh of relief as the accusatory expression drained away from her face as she considered the idea. "I suppose it is what I'd wanted for her," she muttered under her breath before beginning her interrogation again. "When would these lessons be?"

"Every other night," replied her husband, still wary of her temper but mildly reassured by her more concrete question.

"And who would she be learning from?"

Merida decided to help her father out. "There's six different teachers." Eleanor turned around and faced her daughter as she descended the stairs slowly, just as her mother had drilled into her countless times. "Three are kids, three adults."

"And what are their names?"

"Can't tell ya that." Spoke Godric from behind her. "We agreed to keep each other's secrets."

She rounded on her husband again. "You're letting six people, three of whom are children, with dangerous secrets meet with my daughter during the night for so called lessons? What if one of them hurt her?"

"I don't think they're planning anything like that, lass," the big man tried to assure. "It was the two boys who planned it, and Merida and I sort of stumbled on the meeting. They didn't know we were coming. So how could they be planning anything dangerous for her?"

The queen cupped her chin between two fingers as she integrated these newest facts. With those circumstances, planned foul play wouldn't be likely, and Merida might gain some of the skills she'd been wanting Godric to teach her. But two of the children were boys. If the girl was anything like her Merida— "What were the others like?"

"The boys were alright, flying around, but that girl was more like a wee lamb. I'll bet she doesn't know an arrow from a knitting needle." Merida didn't seem enthusiastic about the other female her age, but Eleanor was ecstatic. That was just the sort of influence Merida needed!

But what had Merida said about those boys? Flying around? She glared questioningly at her husband, with a smidge of distrust thrown in for good measure. Godric quickly answered her question. "One of the lads tamed a dragon. I know the boy's father, they're not a bad lot. Although," he mumbled under his breath, "I could do without Salazar."

But Eleanor ignored his grumblings in favor of learning more about the second boy. "How did the other boy fly?"

Merida jumped on that question. "He had this staff that he rode on. You should have seen him, he and his mother dove into that clearing and just slid off it. I wonder how he got it. Maybe I can get one."

"No." Eleanor put her foot down. "A princess does not fly, especially

when she might fall and hurt herself. There will be no flying for you." Merida groaned. Eleanor returned to her questions. "What was the boy's mother like.

Godric thought for a moment. How would he describe Rowena without turning his wife against the idea of letting Merida get more magical training? "She was very knowledgeable about magic, and only seemed interested in learning more about each of the children." He held his breath. This next sentence could end everything. "In fact, she was more interested in Salazar's son than Merida."

To his relief, his wife didn't question the statement and switched the line of questioning. The king rambled on about how ladylike Rapunzel and Helga were, tactfully forgetting to mention the threats of the elder and the tracking skills of the younger. All his wife needed to know was that both loved flowers and had lovely, smooth hair.

* * *

><p>"Are you sure about this Rapunzel?" Helga asked her daughter for what seemed like the fifteenth time since they'd left the clearing.<p>

"Yes, I'm sure," answered the blonde for the fifteenth time. "Maybe I'll learn something that will let me go outside." She looked through the gate, out of their walled world. "Look at it all, so big. I just have to do it." She looked back at her mother, standing at the door to their cottage.

The woman smiled at her daughter. "I know dear. I just didn't think you'd leave the nest so soon." She reached out and pulled her daughter into a hug and stroked her hair. The hair reminded her of something and she pulled away. "Do you ever regret that I drank that magic flower?"

Her daughter smiled at her. "No. I'd rather have this than normal hair and no mother. And maybe I'll use it for something one day."

Helga smirked, raising a teasing eyebrow. "Like healing thorn wounds?"

"No," sassed the blonde, giving her mom the same expression. "More like injuries from a fall off a dragon." Helga laughed at that picture, likely as it was with the company they'd soon be keeping. But that wasn't for a while. Now it was time to tend the flowers and plants and rest up for the night after next.

Please Review!

9. Learning

Godric was not pleased.

Tonight was the night of the meeting with the other three pairs, and a foreign dignitary from the coastal lands to the south had demanded that the king stay up all night listening to his stories of great conquests. Those conquests were probably as true as a counterfeiter's

coin, but Eleanor was making him stay away from the meeting and listen to the man's rambling so they could maintain their trade agreement. So Merida would be going by herself.

No, Godric was not pleased at all.

Merida whistled jauntily as she slung her bow over her shoulder to rest with her quiver and raced through the castle and out onto the grounds. She brushed down Angus and saddled him, barely taking the time to care for her tack before hopping on and taking off through the courtyard, out the castle gate, and into the woods for the meeting.

* * *

><p>"Are you sure you don't want me to come with you?" Helga asked her daughter.<p>

Rapunzel glared at her mother and held up the frying pan she'd armed herself with. "I will use this if you follow me. Even with my hair, broken bones need to rest. What were you thinking, climbing the roof?"

The elder Hufflepuff looked at the hem of her skirt. "I was trying to see if the climbing roses had reached the top yet."

"Well now," stated the blonde as she slipped her cookery weapon into the pack on her back, "You have to stay behind for the first real meeting. Think about that the next time you want to climb the wall." With that, she slipped out of the cottage, across the garden, and through the gate in the wall. She unwound the two long braids from their spiral buns on either side of her head, whipped up the first one to catch on a branch, and hoisted herself into the foliage to begin swinging her way to the meeting place.

* * *

><p>Jack almost laughed. This was just too easy.<p>

Mother was immersed in another of her experiments, a pool of water that would alert her to new magic users in the area. She was so occupied that she forgot what night it was completely, and so raised no fuss about going with him to meet the others. Sometimes being practically invisible to your only parent had its advantages. Jack slipped out the window with his staff, slung a leg over the long part, hooked his feet into the curve, and took off into the night.

As soon as he was high enough, he relaxed his grip on the staff and glided, feeling the wind around him. He knew it was here somewhereâ€|

There! A wind disruption big enough for Toothless, and getting very close. Jack took off in its direction. A few moments later, he was flying alongside his friend. "Hey Hiccup." He took a closer look at the dragon's back. "Where's your dad?"

"He didn't want to come with. He said it would be better for him to stay away in case I needed help." He shrugged. "He's like that, always has plans on top of plans."

"Why would you need help?" asked his flying companion.

"In case one of you attacks me." The other boy snorted. "What? It's happened before." And Hiccup growled to Toothless asking for more speed. The dragon complied and Jack was deprived of his conversationalist.

That made him wonder. When had Hiccup been attacked? Had it been because of his gift with dragons? Had he been hurt? Was it painful to talk about?

_Of course it was, _Jack thought, smacking himself in the forehead. _Sometimes, I can be such an idiot._ He flew faster after his friend in the hopes of apologizing. At least this time he knew where the brunette was headed.

Toothless growled at his rider. "Really friendly, Hiccup."

Hiccup rolled his eyes. "Oh yes, I have to spill all my deepest secrets in the name of friendliness. I'll do that when he does."

"What do you mean? And who's to say he even has secrets."

"Come on Toothless," groaned Hiccup. "The boy makes ice and snow and flies besides. How can there not be a story behind that?"

The dragon huffed. "Well he might have told you if you asked."

The teen just rolled his eyes.

Hiccup landed in the clearing, got off Toothless and walked over to the edge to see if he could see anyone else coming. Then a sharp cry of "Get out of the way!" hit his ear a moment before a girl crashed into the rest of him, knocking him onto his butt.

Hiccup heard draconic laughter behind him. He tilted his head back and growled at his friend. "Ha, ha, very funny."

"I'm sorry," said the projectile commonly known as a girl. "I tried to warn you but I was going a little too fast. Are you okay?" She scrambled off him and extended a hand to help him up.

Hiccup took the hand and hoisted himself to his feet. "I've had worse." He looked at the girl. It was the blonde from yesterday, but she didn't seem to have all her hair. "Did you get a haircut or something?"

"What?" she asked, scrunching together her brows in confusion.

He pointed to her hair. "It's shorter."

She looked back and understood. "No, it's just still in the tree." She gave the braids a good yank and some bushes at the edge of the clearing let out a sudden rustle. Then she began pulling it towards her and the end of the braid trailed out of the bushes and into her arms as she continued to gather it together. She gave the heap of braid in her arms a tired look. "Now I have to put it up again."

Hiccup thought over her dilemma for a moment and said, "Wait, I might have something." He walked over to Toothless, equipped with a pair of saddle bags along with the saddle. Hiccup dug through the right one and came up with a hand sized, six stranded bola. He walked back over to the girl and held out the small bundle of ropes. "Can I try something?" She nodded and turned around so he could reach her hair more easily.

He threaded the Bola through the base of her braid so the connecting circle rested against her head. He looped the long braids together in six circles and tied the first two in place with the first two strands of the bola, repeating the process with the other loops of braid and rope strands. He talked the whole time, telling her what he was doing and how she could take it down later. "You can even take just one section down, like just the end if you need a shorter rope."

"That's a relief," sighed the girl. "It'll be easier than pinning the whole thing back up every time I want to use it." She stood up and tried out the weight of the new hairstyle. It was uncomfortably heavy, having so much hair hanging from just one place. But what ifâ€¦

She reached back and pulled one loop of hair over her head, wearing it like an oversized necklace. She did the same for the other two and found that, with the weight on her shoulders, it was much easier and more comfortable than any of the other hairstyles she and her mother had tried. Not even five minutes into the first meeting and she'd already learned something new.

****Have you ever written a story where you have the basic outline but didn't know exactly how to fill in it? And then the characters you developed did it for you? That's what happened in this chapter with the hair. How did you like what Hiccup did with Rapunzel's hair? I invented that.****

****Please Review!****

****Oh, and due to the fact that I'm going camping tomorrow and won't even have cell phone reception let alone internet, the next chapter will appear on Sunday.****

****Also, I need some OC ideas. I'm bringing other wizard kids into the story, so if you have ideas, PM or review. They can be characters from different films or OCs.****

10. A Little Taste

_ Hiccup flies fast when he's escaping, _ Jack mused as he still tried to catch up to his skyscape companion. But Jack couldn't blame him. Who'd want to talk to mister insensitive? He looked down at the ground and caught a flash of red. Melancholy forgotten, he zoomed down through the trees and hovered right in front of the redheaded girl from yesterday, startling the horse. The girl shrieked as the animal stopped so suddenly that she fell off the back in a heap. Jack laughed.

"Oh yeah, laugh at the poor girl. Don't even think of helping her

up." Moaned the disheveled damsel. "I don't suppose you could calm my horse, seeing as you're the one who spooked him in the first place."

Jack laughed again and stroked the animal's nose. "He's not spooked, just jumpy. And as princess, I don't think you're poor enough to warrant my help."

Merida grinned at the comment. "True enough," she said as she got to her feet and walked towards the boy. "I'm Merida."

"Jack." He extended a hand and she grabbed it, beginning to move it up and down. But then Jack gave a quick tug and she flew face first into a pile of leaves. He was about to slip his hand out of hers when there was another quick tug and he joined her. That was why, when they entered the clearing, both had leaves in their hair and very pleased expressions on their faces.

Hiccup and Rapunzel took one look at the messy duo and sighed. "What did they do to each other," moaned Hiccup as he took in the foliage-bedecked clothes.

"Just as long as they don't do it to me," murmured the blonde as she fingered her braids. "It takes forever to wash my hair as it is. I don't even want to think about picking the leaves out of it."

But it seemed the tow had had enough mischief for one day, because Jack raised a hand and waved to the pair. "Hey, guys." He and Merida walked towards them. He looked Rapunzel over for a moment. "What's with your hair? Get tired of buns?"

"Hiccup did it, actually," she commented. "I like it better like this."

Jack looked at his friend and wiggled his eyebrows, but instead of blushing, the dragon rider just rolled his eyes. Darn it. He wouldn't be able to tease him about that. But it was good to see the bad mood their conversation had brought on vanished.

Jack put his hands behind his head. "So, what should we do today?" They looked at him like he'd gone crazy. "What? We're supposed to learn about each other?"

Hiccup shrugged. "True, but maybe we should introduce ourselves first." He sat down and gestured for the others to join him.

"What should we say? We already know everyone's names," inquired the Hufflepuff as she crossed her legs in front of her.

"How about you name, your clan, and your ability?" offered Merida.

"Sounds good to me. I'll go first." Jack cleared his throat. "I'm Jackson Ravenclaw, but call me Jack. My mom only calls me Jackson when I'm in trouble." They all laughed at that. "I don't really have a clan, since I never met my dad and Mom's not a social person. I can control ice, snow, that sort of thing, along with a few, smaller things and using my staff to fly. Who's next?"

"Me!" volunteered the redhead. "I'm Merida DunBrogh, from Clan

DunBrogh, the rulers in this area. That makes me the princess, but I don't want to be." Rapunzel started to speak but was quickly cut off by the continued introduction. "I've been trained to handle weapons using magic, and can see will-o-the-wisps. They actually led me to the first meeting."

"You're a princess," burst out Rapunzel.

"Yes, and it's not nearly the picnic everyone thinks." That shut up the other girl rather quickly.

Hiccup broke the tension. "My name's Hiccup." The other three laughed at that. "Yeah, I know. But my mom had Viking heritage. Vikings believe a hideous name will frighten of nomes and trolls."

"Nomes and trolls aren't real," argued Merida.

"Did you think dragons were real before you met Toothless," Hiccup threw back.

"Point taken." Maybe they could get along after all.

"I'm from Clan Slytherin. Actually, I'm the last of it. People often thought we were devils or something because we could speak to snakes. Now it's just me and Dad."

"What about yer mum?"

"She wasn't from Slytherin." Merida wanted to ask more, but Jack discreetly laid a hand on her leg. She decided to keep quiet and let Hiccup finish. "I can speak to most reptiles, including dragons, which is why Toothless and I are such good friends. Dad taught me some magic, mostly to keep Toothless secret, but we could probably learn more from him. He studied under a mage."

"I'm Rapunzel, and I don't really have a clan. I didn't know my father either. He died before I was born getting medicine for my mom. Hufflepuff is my mom's last name. I have magic hair that glows when I sing."

"What?" asked Jack, both skeptical and shocked.

"I have magic hair that glows when I sing. Watch!" But before she could start, Hiccup slapped a hand over her mouth.

She threw him a glare. He apologized with his eyes and explained, "We don't know who might be watching. Let me put up some barriers." He strolled around the perimeter of the clearing, waving his hands. When he finished walked around the edges, Hiccup strolled to the center and raised his hands. Golden walls sprang from the edges of the clearing and came together in a point right above Hiccup. The others stared. He blushed slightly at the attention. "I can teach you guys that if you want."

"You better!" yelled Merida. "That was amazing!" His blush deepened and Jack grinned to himself. This was excellent teasing material.

Hiccup looked at Rapunzel and smiled. "You can show us your hair now. Anyone who looks in here will see just a regular clearing."

She smiled and the other three gathered around her. "Flower gleam and glow, let your power shine." The roots of her hair shone warmly, brightening her natural honey hue to a brilliant sunshine yellow. With every line of the song, it continued further down her hair, making the rings of braid around her neck look like a halo that had slipped. "What once was mine." She stopped singing and her hair ceased to glow.

There was a moment of silence before Jack burst out with "That was awesome!" She blushed.

_Hah! I'm not sure who'll be more fun to tease, her or Hiccup, _ Jack thought, already planning. By that time, it was already midnight, the deadline for Rapunzel and Hiccup to get home, and without those two, there really wasn't much to do. So the four went back to their families, heads spinning about what they'd learned about each other.

So, a little canon and a little non-canon. I got the image for the wards from HP 7. What did you guys think?

Review!

11. Others

Rowena looked up from the enchanted map she'd been working on for the past three months, ever since they met up with those others when she heard Jack whooshing out one of the windows. "Hold up Jack, I'm coming with you this time."

The teen rolled his eyes. "Mom, last time you came Toothless almost set you on fire."

"Only because I wanted to test out a new flame-proofing charm," cooed the woman. "Besides, Salazar's son pulled me out of the way before I was in any real danger."

He looked to the ceiling. "Yes, but he wouldn't let any of us near Toothless for the next five meetings. You scared both of them. And don't you have your detectorâ€¦thingy to work on?"

"Nope." She brandished the rolled up map. "All finished. I just need to test it, and I need the others for that. Now let's go!" She grabbed her son's hand, pulled him out the door, and got on the broom. "Well," she demanded.

"Okay." He did a quick invisibility enchantment Hiccup had demanded they all learn during one of the first lessons.

He'd claimed that if anyone followed one of them, all of them would suffer for it. "It's not just yourself you have to worry about anymore," he'd yelled after Merida protested for the fifth time when she still couldn't get the hang of it. "What about the rest of us? What about our parents?" That had halted the protests.

Rowena poked him in the back, so he slung a leg over the staff and sat in front of his mother so she could grab onto his waist as they took off into the sky. His mother's grip tightened the higher they

went. It was funny, really. The inventor of flight unaided by another species was afraid of heights. Well, at least she had him for a son.

The sky around them appeared to be empty, but once they slipped beneath the protective dome Hiccup had created the first day, the selfsame brunette appeared suddenly, wiping the traces of his own concealment spell of himself and Toothless. Merida and Rapunzel appeared just as suddenly mere moments later. Hiccup beamed. "You're all getting very good at that."

"Yeah, yeah," scoffed Merida. "Now will you teach us how to make that dome? All you've taught us is how to make ourselves invisible and the like."

"Those spells are very important!" defended Hiccup.

"And why is that, fishbone?"

"Because they can save your life!" Jack and Rapunzel were satisfied with that answer, but Merida wasn't. She'd been using magic all her life, and thought it something to be proud of. All this hiding went against her nature.

She marched up to the dragon rider and got right in his face, a feat made easy by their even height. "Have you ever seen sneaking save someone's life?"

He took a step forward so they were inches apart and Merida began to shiver. The expression on Hiccup's face made her feel two feet tall and she wanted to shrink back, away from that gaze. But her pride would not let her. So she stood there and faced that serious expression when he let out a "Yes" that quieted her shaking from shock.

He turned and walked away from her so he stood beside Toothless. Rapunzel stepped forward and laid a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Who was it?"

"Me," whispered the youth, but all three heard it.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Asked the blonde gingerly.

"Not really."

"Okay." She walked away and after a few seconds, he followed.

Jack couldn't stand the tension. "Guys, my mom has something to show us."

Rowena exited hypothesis-forming mode and entered back into the present world. "That's right. You kids are gonna love this," and she unrolled the map onto the ground.

Hiccup glanced over it. "Is this a map of here?"

"Yep," Jack's mom crowed and pointed to one area. "This is where we are right now, and these," she pointed to the scraggly lines drawn on a peninsula, "are the ruins where you live with your father. Don't worry, no one knows about them except me and Jack, and of course you

two." She waited for his shoulders to relax before she continued. "Now, this map is enchanted to show those with magical capabilities. I've done all the spell work already, all I need now is samples of various magic-tainted bloods." She looked meaningfully at the children around her.

Merida removed her dagger from its sheathe and sliced her palm open. She was about to offer it to Rowena when Rapunzel grabbed her wrist. "What are you thinking? What if she wanted to use it for something else?"

Merida shrugged. "What else would she use it for?" Rowena jumped to assure both girls that she would only use their blood for the map, but that wasn't enough for Rapunzel. "Can you do this right now?"

The woman smiled. "Of course. You can even watch." A look passed between the two boys as Rapunzel gingerly accepted the dagger from her fiery companion and slit her own palm. Jack and Hiccup walked over to Toothless and had him use his claw on their hands. When they rejoined the rest of the group, dragon trailing behind them, Rowena smiled. "Just put your hands over the map and let the blood fall onto it."

They stretched out their arms and waited as the blood accumulated on the undersides of their hands. Then the droplets of red liquid fell towards the parchment, splashing slightly as they hit the smooth surface. Quickly, the color soaked the slightly yellowed map and then, to their slight astonishment, lightened until the red tinge was gone completely. Hiccup and the girls looked to Rowena for an explanation. She said, "watch," and pointed back towards the parchment.

Five small lights sprang into existence in the field Rowena had pointed out earlier. Others lit in the ruins, the walled garden, and Merida's castle. "Are those our parents?" asked Hiccup.

"Yes. They're the closest magically to you, so they're the ones who showed up first, if my hypothesis is correct. Other magic users should show on the map eventually, but it will take much longer. I'll keep you posted. For now, I'll just sit over there," pointing at the corner of the enclosure, "and see if any other magic users pop up."

****Tada! What did you guys think of the map? It works with magic like genes, identifying the magic of the owners first and then the magic closest to the original. That's why their parents lit up so fast. It's sort of like a primitive Marauder's Map. By the way, I tried really hard with some of the descriptions in this chapter. Can you see the work? does it add to the story? ****

****Please review or PM, guys! I'll be switching this to a Brave/Tangled story soon.****

12. Flying Lessons

Jack held his staff out to Merida. "Your turn." She grinned and grabbed the staff. Those three months of wheedling and bugging had finally paid off. She slid one leg over the broom and made sure her

skirt still covered her legs somewhat.

She was about to take off when Hiccup shouted, "Wait! Spell yourself!"

The redhead huffed. Even if he had reasons, did he have to be so cautious about everything? She waved her wand over herself and the staff, spelling both into a state of invisibility if she went beyond the wards, which she planned to.

Then Jack started coaching her. "Kick off from the ground and don't tilt, that'll send the broom off it a different direction. Just hover the first time. Okay?" She nodded and did as he said, though she really wanted to lean forward and shoot off into the sky. Jack noticed the look in her eyes and glanced first at Hiccup, then at Toothless lying on the grass.

The dragon raised his sleepy head as Hiccup settled into the saddle. "Are we leaving already?"

The boy groaned. "Nope. Jack's teaching Merida to fly and wants us to act as a safety net."

Toothless perked up at that. "Good. I've wanted some catching practice, but Jack's too good."

The teen chuckled at his dragon's impatience. "Well she'll probably fall the first time she tries to go up."

Merida descended from her hover and let Jack give her further instructions. "Okay, this time lean slightly to the left. That'll make you fly in that direction. Once you've gone a few feet, lean the other way and come back here." She did as he told; although she went a bit farther than he thought she should.

After a few more maneuvers to the side and in different directions at ground level, Jack grabbed the top of the handle and told her what she really wanted to know. "If you want to go up, press on the crook with your feet and pull back in the handle. Do it gently at first, or you'll shoot up and probably fall off. Try just a little this first time."

Merida followed those instructions for exactly one second before she shot up through the sky, past the barrier, and into open air space. Jack sighed and looked to Hiccup. The brunette put a hand on the side of his friend's head. "Want to catch a redhead?"

"As long as it's not by the hair." And they took off after the out-of-control girl on a stick.

Rapunzel walked over and stood with Jack. Looking up at the retreating figure with her red hair trailing behind her like a comet's tail, she asked, "Do you think you could teach me next?"

He laughed. "If you're going to listen, sure. But I think you might want to go with Hiccup first."

She tilted her head at him and asked, "Why?"

Jack shrugged. "You might not like heights. My mom doesn't, so she

can't fly without me. Can't concentrate."

"Why didn't Merida need a ride?"

He laughed. "Letting her fly was sort of a prank. I was hoping she'd freak out and leave me alone about it. But, seeing that, I don't think she's scared of heights. I actually don't think she's scared of anything." They looked back up at the sky in time to see Hiccup catch the end of the staff and pull Merida onto the dragon. He landed a moment later, one hand around the staff, the other full of furious redhead.

"Put me down! I don't need your mollycoddling," Merida roared at the boy holding her on the back of the dragon.

"As you wish," replied the boy serenely, before promptly dropping her on the forest floor.

She spat a red curl out of her mouth and glared at the dragon rider. "There was no need for that."

He smirked as he unstrapped himself. "You asked me to let go, so I did." Jack was very proud of his friend at that moment.

He walked up and slung an arm across the boy's bony shoulders. "We may make a prankster out of you yet." Hiccup rolled his eyes and batted the boy's arm away. Jack let himself be shooed away and walked over to Rapunzel, grabbing her by the shoulders and holding her out to the windblown male. "Here's another passenger for you."

Toothless groaned, although only Hiccup understood. "Please tell me she won't squirm as much." The boy laughed and gestured for Rapunzel to join them before asking, "What kind of ride would you like?"

"Can we go straight up?" Hiccup looked at her like she'd lost her mind. "I want to make sure I'm not afraid of heights."

_Okay, that makes sense, especially if she wants to try Jack's staff, _thought the boy as his confused expression cleared and he helped up and into the saddle. "Hold on tight."

"To what?"

"To me!" and the pair took off into the sky.

The other two teenaged magic users watched as their friend climbed higher and higher, Hiccup letting out exhilarated whoops and Rapunzel screaming in delight. Or fear. They couldn't really tell which from this distance. Merida whispered to Jack, "Think we could follow and spook them?"

He grinned at her and replied, "What, the first time wasn't enough for you?"

"What are you saying? Of course it wasn't-"

"There's another light!" shouted Rowena, cutting the young Gryffindor off midsentence. Jack was in the air almost instantly, chasing down the pair to tell them to come down and have a look while Merida ran towards the woman currently staring intently at her map.

****I thought I'd give you guys a fluffier chapter before we dug back into the serious stuff. Did you like the dialogue with Toothless and the way I handled the flying lessons?****

****Please review and/or PM!****

13. The Truth

Hiccup spiraled upwards and laughed as Rapunzel's grip tightened on him from behind and she buried her face in his shoulder. "Take a look. You're missing the view!"

He felt her head shake. "Too scared!"

"Come on," he whined. "You swing through the trees all the time. Are you really afraid of heights?"

"Insane ones, yeah!"

"Just take a look." Then he growled to his friend, "Aren't he high enough, bud?" The dragon let out a chuckle and leveled off. The lack of wind whistling in her ears encouraged Rapunzel to crack her eyes open.

It was breathtaking. Mountains in the distance bordered the starry sky like fingers of a craggy hand that dipped into the bowl of night softly lit by the three-quarter moon. Rapunzel relaxed her grip on Hiccup so she was no longer pressed against his back, although one arm remained firmly curled around his thin waist. With the other, she reached up and traced pictures in the sky by connecting the stars.

Then a whoosh sounded and Jack was right beside them, hovering on his staff. "Guys, come down," yelled the boy over the sound of flight-born wind. "Mom's map found another magic user!" Then he dove, back on the ground in a matter of seconds.

Toothless followed in a lazier, spiral pattern and soon all five were again on the ground, huddled around the map. There was a very faint light in the area labeled village near Godric's light in the castle. Merida shouted, "There's another one, and it's right by where I live!"

Rapunzel poked her in the side. "We can see that. No need to yell in my ear." But she was really just as excited as Merida. She might have another girl to talk to about magic! Even if it was a boy, it would still be neat to add another person to the gang.

"But how would we find them," voiced Hiccup as he stared at the map. "This is too general to tell, and it's not in an isolated area. It's in the middle of a town with probably a hundred other people. How are we going to find one magic user in that crowd, especially if they don't want to be found?"

Rapunzel grinned. "We'll just have to figure it out. Are you up for it?" The answering grins around the circle gave a resounding yes.

Hiccup broke the link by looking back down at the map. Then he asked the only adult of the group, "Are they supposed to move like that?"

Rowena examined the area of the new light and saw that it had indeed changed locations. "Well," she started, a little unsure, "It could be a glitch in the map, but it's more likely the person themselves is moving. Merida," She looked up at the princess, "Can you tell me where it's headed?"

The girl nodded and looked back down at the map, inspecting the layout of markings and comparing them to the roads and buildings of her home. When it went past the gate, she exclaimed, "They're going into the castle! I wonder if they work there." She suddenly started pulling at her hair. "There was another magic user right under my nose and I didn't know it! I am an idiot!"

Rapunzel grabbed the fistful of hair and held it close to Merida's head so she didn't pull anymore. "It's alright," soothed the girl. "You couldn't have known. None of us would have."

"Hiccup would have known," she accused, glaring at said boy. "Probably has a spell for it."

"I've taught you everything I know," Hiccup fired back.

"You haven't taught us how you made that ward, or how to talk to Toothless."

"I can't teach you that. And the wards--"

"How do you know?" Merida's question enraged the rider. Did she seriously just ask him that? Did she think that, after ten years of running because of his stupid power, he wouldn't know all he could about it?

"Because I tried!" he yelled into the clearing, stunning the royal into silence. He sighed. "Before I found out about magic, I had a friend, well, a human friend. One day, she told me a secret, about a cove with a pond. Then she asked me to tell her one. So I told her about Toothless and how I could talk to him."

_Please stop talking, _Jack thought as his friend curled in on himself the more of the story he told. He knew this was the nerve he'd stepped on before and he didn't want to hear about it. But Hiccup kept plowing through. "I didn't know it was different or wrong, so I showed her. She loved Toothless, and thought my growling sounded funny. Then she wanted to try. I showed her a few words, like 'hello' and 'Toothless', but she couldn't make the sounds. She got frustrated, and told me she was going to tell her parents about how I lied and told her she could talk to dragons."

"I went home and told Dad and Mom what had happened," _Wait, this was while his mom was still alive? _Jack wondered. _Now I really don't want to hear the rest. _"Dad said we had to get away, but my mom was eight months with child." He paused and Merida noticed how small he looked, legs drawn up to his chest, back hunched over, and face almost entirely hidden. She turned to Jack and saw that he'd gotten to his feet and was poised to turn and run. What was he scared of? "She couldn't move fast enough and the mob got her. I tried to teach

someone how to talk with dragons, and I lost my mother and possible brother or sister." Oh. That was what Jack had wanted to run from. To be honest, she did too.

Rapunzel slid an arm around his shoulders and gave a gentle squeeze. "It's alright. No one here is going to hurt you or your father. So you don't have to be afraid." Hiccup relaxed and smiled at all of them, and Jack relaxed.

The white-haired teen stood up and stretched. "Okay, that's enough emotional talking for one night. Why don't we go home and think of a way to find this new magic user tomorrow?"

Hiccup nodded and rubbed a hand over Toothless' snout, where the animal had placed it over his shoulder as he curled into himself, lost in the memories of his mother's screams. "Yeah."

"Well," said Merida as she brushed herself off, "I'll be going then." She walked to the edge of the clearing where Angus was tethered and leapt into the saddle with help from a small boulder. The other three also prepared to depart.

****And so the truth about Hiccup comes out. This conversation is going to start a lot of balls rolling.****

****By the way, if you're a fan of BBC's Sherlock check out another of my stories, A Highly Personal Challenge. It's both a story and a challenge for my fellow writers.****

14. Planting the Seeds

As she rode back to the castle, Merida wanted Angus to throw her, hard. She was such an idiot. Why did she have to say those things? Why did she have to drag up those memories?

And why did she foolishly assume that just because her family could practice magic freely that everyone could? For crying out loud, all the magic Hiccup knew was used to hide! That should have given her at least a clue about what it was like for the others.

Fire and sword, the others! What if their lives were like that too? Now that she thought about it, she was the only one with both parents. What if Rapunzel's and Jack's fathers had died the same way Hiccup's mom had?

She let the reins go slack in her hands and Angus halted her steps. People weren't always accepting of her father's magic. Some of the ambassadors had been flat out offended by it. But what if those countries that hated magic decided to attack them? She could lose her father, mother, three little brothers. There had to be some way to keep them all safe.

Wait. Hiccup could put up wards so no one could see their magic. What if he put one around their castle? A smile began creeping back onto her face. Now she had a plan.

Line Break

Jack hopped onto his staff and pulled Rowena on behind him. He smiled

at Hiccup, who stood next to Rapunzel with his arms around Toothless. "I'll see you nigh after tomorrow, then?"

"Yeah," he replied. "Maybe I can bring Dad and have him teach you guys about wards." Jack nodded at the rider's attempt at normalcy and flew off with a mother clinging desperately to his waist.

Rapunzel untied the first two strands of the bola and let loose a length of braid. "Well, I'd better get going to."

"Wait," stuttered out Hiccup. "I could take you home."

"Really?" She asked, tying her braid back up.

"Sure. It's night, so no one will see us, and it'll take less time." He vaulted into the saddle and extended a hand downward.

"I don't know." She looked over at Toothless.

"Hiccup smiled. "Toothless does what I ask, most of the time. I won't let you fall."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Do you trust me?" She grabbed his hand and hoisted herself up as an answer.

As they flew over the forest, Rapunzel ventured a question. "So who was the friend?"

"What?" Asked the boy she held onto firmly.

"The friend you tried to teach to talk to dragons, what was her name?" He tensed under her hands and she slapped herself for her insensitivity. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have brought it up."

"No, it's okay." They flew for a few moments and Rapunzel thought Hiccup wasn't going to continue when he said, "Astrid."

"What?"

"That was her name."

Rapunzel giggled. "That's a weird name."

Hiccup laughed along with her. "Maybe, but Hiccup's weirder."

The laughter encouraged Rapunzel in her queries. "What was she like?"

He took a hand off the saddle and put it under his chin. "Strong. She taught me how to climb trees. We'd have races all the time, in the trees and on the ground. She wasn't really afraid of anything, not spiders or the bigger kids." He chuckled to himself. "I probably would've been beaten up a lot more if I hadn't had her for a friend."

"Was she pretty?" What did Hiccup find attractive?

"I don't know. I wasn't thinking about it at the time, sine we were so little, and I don't remember what she looked like well enough to form an opinion now. But I do remember that she had blonde hair and blue eyes."

"Kind of like a combination of me and Merida."

He snorted. "Yeah, it's not like color only has one shade."

She frowned at that. "What do you mean?"

"Well, when someone thinks of red hair they think of hair like Merida's. I'm actually red-haired too, but no one notices because I'm not their idea of red."

She arched an eyebrow. "No one notices because the only time they see you is during the night. Not the best time to study color facets, if you know what I mean."

He grinned. "Perhaps we should meet up during the day sometime. We can study each other's' eyes and hair. I'd love to see the different colors Jack hides in that white mop of his." The picture of Hiccup weeding through the other boy's hair looking for something besides white made her laugh out loud with such gusto that she banged into Hiccup. But the boy pondered her idea all the way to her garden home and back to his partially caved in one. What would it be like to see the others in the sunlight, without the need to hide?

Line Break

Ms. Ravenclaw unfurled the map on a table the instant she and Jack were in the house. Jack asked, "Do you think I could go by myself next time?" No response. "Mom?"

Sighing at her ability to become totally oblivious to her surroundings in a matter of milliseconds, Jack conjured a snowball and spilt it down the back of her dress. She yelped. "Jack! What was that for?"

He flew out of her reach and into the rafters. "Well you didn't answer when I asked, soâ€¦" he swirled his hand through the air, conjuring more snowflakes.

She glowered at him. "There was no need to dump cold snow on me. You could have just poked me or something."

"I would, except you're immune to it," the boy mumbled under his breath before asking his question a second time. "Well, could I go by myself to the next meeting?"

"Absolutely not!" Shouted the woman up at him, indignant. "That boy has a story and I intend to find out what it is! Besides," she gestured at the map. "I want to know how you plan to find the new magic user. You can't keep me out of the loop, it's my map!" She snatched up said piece of parchment and held it close to her chest.

Jack shook his head at her childish behavior, really, who was the adult in this family again? But he could probably find something to bury her mind in before the next meeting. If she planned to unearth

Hiccup's past, clearly full of painful memories, he wasn't letting her near him with a ten foot pole.

****The part about hair color is actually me venting. I'm a mix of blonde, brown and red, but the only color people notice is the brown. And for those of you who read through shipping glasses, TAKE THEM OFF! They're not even sixteen yet.****

****Please review. It's very discouraging to get so little feedback.****

15. Witch Hazel

Rapunzel tenderly brushed a finger across the witch hazel plant she was tending. The herb was amazing. Useful and beautiful in a spindly sort of way, it thrived in the cold and grew to twenty feet high, if you let it. Hiccup's face popped up in her mind's eye beside the plant's delicate yellow blossoms. She smiled to herself. "You have a lot in common, you know that? And magic users are often called witches." She plucked two dozen of the broader leaves to soak in the fermented grape juice they'd bought from the castle and headed back to the cottage.

When her mother had left for the town that morning, the blonde had told her about the potential magic user and to keep an eye out for anything interesting. She loathed using the word suspicious, reminded her too much about how their gifts had to be hidden. She brushed the lock of brown hair over her shoulder and tucked it back into its loop around her neck.

Mother had loved how Hiccup fixed her hair. It was much easier to tend without pins and no sore spots on her scalp from where the surprisingly pointy hair accessories had been pushed in a little too far. She'd even started to wear her own hair in a loop around her neck, although she could only manage one. Who knows? Her friend might have started a new trend for hair in the village.

Rapunzel took out the small pot of alcoholic grape juice and dropped the leaves into the top, sealing it again with a nifty charm she'd learned from Rowena. It was nice to know that all that experimenting had useful results. That map, for example.

She put the pot back on its shelf with the other brews and rested her elbows on one of the lower hanging ones. What was the new magic user like? Her mother hadn't seen anythingâ€¦exciting (She refused to use 'unusual' as well. Too much wrongness inherent in the word). Had the person discovered their magic yet? Did they have inherited abilities, like Hiccup? Or were they like Jack and her, not knowing where their powers came from? Perhaps they didn't have a specific ability, but just the sort of raw magic that seemed to run through Merida like the blood that turned her cheeks ruddy when Jack teased her.

Letting her chin fall into her hands, she sighed and wondered what the others thought of this latest discovery.

Line Break

Salazar paced through what they'd been using as a living room. Hiccup followed the older man with his eyes. Perhaps he shouldn't have told

them about the possibility of another person like them. Then the man suddenly began talking aloud. "Perhaps we could just erase it."

Suddenly Hiccup was furious. "Erase what? Their magic?"

"No," Salazar quickly placated, "their memory."

But that just seemed to make his son angrier. "Their memory of what? Who they are? What they've been given? It's not that easy." Then suddenly the fire was gone from the boy and he sank back down into one of their makeshift chairs.

Why did his son suddenly look far older than his age? "What's wrong, son?"

"It's justâ€¦" the boy trailed a hand over his eyes. "What if they're like me? What if they have a gift they don't know seems wrong and don't try to control it? What if he ends up like me?"

He knelt down and wrapped his boy in a hug. "I won't let that happen."

A harsh laugh sounded through his arms and bounced off the stone walls of the somewhat intact room. "How would you do that?"

"I'm going to make a place where all of you, all of us, can be safe." Yes, the idea was starting to form inside his head now. Why hadn't he seen this before? He removed his arms from around Hiccup's shoulders and took one of his hands, pulling him up. Salazar gestured grandly to the walls. "We're going to make this castle live again, and when we do, all magical children and their families will live safe inside it, with golden wards and stone walls to keep everyone else out. Of course," He turned to his son, his genius son, "I'm going to need someone to help me re build this place."

There, that expression of weariness was gone. "Well, if you need an architect, I'm your man!" The two Slytherins went to find some paper and ink to start on the plans for a grand castle with the foundations already laid.

The beginning was rather tedious, measuring all the existing structures and constructing the blueprints of the new castle around them. "I think," decided Hiccup as he stared at the leftover stones in front of him, "that this should be the main eating area."

"Why do you say that, Hiccup?" Asked Salazar with a grin. It was always fun to watch his son working in his element, with Toothless or tweaking.

"Well, it's the biggest room we've got, so there's not much else it can be used for."

The elder shrugged. "Godric might like to use it as a practice room for training."

The younger shook his head. "He doesn't need walls for that, and if he demands it we can move the furniture out of the way. But it's not just the size." He picked up a handful of soil under his feet and crumbled it between his fingers. "The stone foundation doesn't go far

down, and the earth is soft here. We could build the kitchen underneath the dining room. It gives the room some needed support and makes delivery of the food easy. I've actually got a couple systems in mind for that."

"Let's see them, then."

He shook his head. "They're back in my room. Let's finish the measuring and then we can go back and I'll show them to you." The measurements were handled quickly using a stick Hiccup had marked all over in order to make more accurate measurements and headed back to the rooms they'd already occupied.

Witch hazel is a real plant, one that fit quite well with this story. And the way Rapunzel feels about certain words is another trait I incorporated from myself. What do you think?

Review, PM, and check out some of my other stories.

16. Pictures

Salazar followed his puppy-eager son back through the ruins to what had at one time been a section of wall that doubled as quarters for guards. The structure was built to withstand the forces of an invasion, so it was reasonably intact, even after all these years of ravishing by time. The doorway, made of wood, had caved in somewhat, but only enough that Salazar had to duck to enter what the two had designated as Hiccup's room. He looked up from his crouched position just inside the room and abruptly straightened, staring at the walls around him.

Every inch of visible wall was covered in drawings. Hiccup had taken charcoal and drawn, written, and scribbled all over the stone until the room was a masterpiece of the mind. The sketch to his immediate right was of a saddlebag design, the one Toothless currently sported. But when he looked closer, the man saw that it was actually different, more advanced. The straps were designed to fit around his smaller set of wings directly behind the main ones, and the bags themselves were slightly more streamlined, to distribute the weight better, he guessed.

Hiccup looked up from the drawing on the far wall of the potential pulley system for the dining room and noticed what his father was staring at. "Oh, yeah, that's not finished."

"Not finished?" He looked over at his son in befuddled amazement. "What about this design is not finished?"

The boy scratched at his nose, a mild blush building in his cheeks at his father's tone. "There are a few minor calibration issues. I've got to test the durability of the harness design since the straps are thinner, and I'll need to come up with alternative methods in case something doesn't fit into the bags. They are smaller than the original designâ€¦sorry, I'm babbling."

"No it'sâ€¦fine." He smiled at the boy. "So where's this system you wanted me to look at?"

"Oh." He pointed to the picture he'd just been inspecting. "That's

right here." Salazar walked over and began scanning the picture while Hiccup explained the details. "It runs on a pulley system, with the lever releasing the rock at one end. If we built the chutes right into the walls, it would be pretty easy to install the systems."

"It's a fine idea, son." Hiccup beamed. "Why don't you start gathering the materials for a prototype?" He ran out of the room, leaving his father to marvel.

To the right of the design for the pulley system was portraits of Toothless in various positions and moods. One at eye level showed the dragon curled up like a cat, legs tucked neatly under his belly and head resting on the end of his tail. The graceful lines of the folded wings drew the eye back towards the tail, which in turn directed you to the sleeping but still somehow playful face. The ear flaps on the back of his head brushed against the upper joint of the wing, drawing your attention once again to their reposeful beauty. The portrait was a circle of restful grace.

Above that picture was a completely different one, with Toothless almost hanging in the air as his wings spread out behind him, his body hung low and his mouth obscured by an unmistakable plasma blast. Hiccup used the same sort of effect as in the picture of the sleeping Toothless, using the sweeping lines to direct your attention elsewhere. The swish of the tail, curve of the body, and tense stretch of the wings all pointed towards the most powerful element of the dragon, its fire-breathing maw. The beauty here was terrible and powerful, almost a warning. Oh yes, his son was gifted.

The portrait to the right of the flying one made him laugh out loud. It was one of Hiccup and Toothless together in a situation that never failed to make Salazar laugh. Toothless was sitting upright, on the base of his tail, using its length for balance. His back legs gave support while his front ones were tucked against his exposed belly. The ear flaps were up and eyes wide with dilated, curious pupils.

The focus of those eyes was one Hiccup Slytherin holding up his first attempts at saddle bags. The boy's figure was noticeably less detailed but still got the gangly, friendly feeling of the brunette across. Salazar looked from one figure to the other and suddenly wondered what it would look like if Hiccup drew himself with some of Toothless' characteristics. He could only imagine how ear flaps and a twitching tail would add to his already very expressive self.

But before he could look more closely at the walls in the hope of finding such a depiction, Hiccup popped his head through the door frame. "Dad, what do you want for lunch?"

The man looked up and asked, "Well, what are my options?"

"Rapunzel showed me some of the edible plants in the area, so quite a few. How about some of the deer we cooked yesterday from Toothless' hunt and the wild kale?"

"Sounds delicious. Why don't we eat in the new dining hall?"

The remark worked and a laugh sounded through the small room. "Sure, Dad. You coming?"

"Yes, son." Salazar walked out of an artist's world and back into the one where his son needed a protector.

Line Break

Yes, the idea of a safe place for magic users and their families was an intriguing one, Godric had to admit. And the news that another one had popped up, in the village no less, had driven home her point. But they couldn't use his castle, he had too many people coming in or out of it, particularly foreigners. No, he would have to find somewhere else. Salazar moved on an almost monthly basis because of his son's curse, perhaps he would know a better spot.

But why did it have to be just a sanctuary? Why not a school or training center? It could be like what he and Salazar had had with the old warlock, only on a grander scale. They would need teachers, of course, and training grounds and such, but the areas were the easy part. The difficulty would definitely be the teachers.

He could, of course, ask his old master to be in on the project, and Salazar would add the knowledge he'd learned while running. The boy knew plenty, if his daughter's new knowledge was anything to go by. Perhaps they could bring in more dragons. What a boon that would be to his military! He'd have to convince Salazar, of course, but that would be easy. He'd just beat him in a duel or something.

The ladies seemed equally knowledgeable, with their plants and experiments. Just a little of the Gryffindor charm and he'd have them at his feet. Eleanor would have hit him over the head if she'd known what he was thinking, but luckily she was upstairs trying to tame their daughter's hair. Speaking of hair, perhaps he'd learn the secret to Rapunzel's, that was her name, powers. He'd have a nearly undefeatable army if he could somehow replicate that as well. He still couldn't quite wrap his head around the other kid. Flying on a stick? How exactly did that work? Honestly, he preferred the dragon idea.

But for any of that to come to fruition, he needed an army of untrained magic users and the people and place to train them.

****The portrait idea came from a story called Two Princesses of Bamare, written by the author of Ella Enchanted. I totally recommend it. How were the descriptions?****

****Please review, PM, and check out my other stuff.****

17. School's in Session

"Well, if we're going to run this school how will we divide up the students? I mean, we have to make class sizes manageable." Helga waved her hands for emphasis. "It also helps to order things. We don't want the students fighting over seating areas or some such nonsense." She gestured to the nearly completed hall as she talked, nearly hitting Rapunzel, who was seated next to her, in the face.

The idea of a training ground that doubled as a sanctuary had gained much popularity since the night when Hiccup exposed his history with

people's superstition and misunderstanding. The Hufflepuffs and Slytherins had worked tirelessly on the castle, enforcing the walls with wards and charms as well as the physical defenses. Hiccup had had a hand in designing those, and so was quite proud of the building, which included his design for the food delivery system, a sweeping grand staircase right off his sketching walls, and towers that stood due solely to his calculations. And with the way Rapunzel had trained plants, magical and mundane, all over the walls and planted them in the primitive courtyards, the place was beautiful in both the natural and architectural aspects. Of course, Salazar had adjusted his son's ideas when they got a bit too extravagant and Helga had helped with the transport and initial planting, as well as the procurement of some of the rarer specimens. Their pride and joy was the Witch Hazel in the main courtyard that was growing quite nicely.

"Why not divide them by their ages?" suggested Godric, who finally got away from his kingly duties long enough to have a discussion. "Simple."

"No, that won't work." Salazar shot down. "We don't have enough potential students for that to work, and their ages are all over the place. Perhaps if the attendance age was more regular, yes, but for now we need something different. What would be the best number of groups?"

"Well," piped up Rowena, "There's only four teachers at the moment with all of us except Godric and you old teacher," she nodded towards Salazar, "So why not a system with four?"

"Great idea!" shouted the redheaded man. Hiccup flinched and Merida gave him a sympathetic grimace. The two of them were seated on either side of her father, and while she had years of experience with his loud voice, Hiccup lived mostly in silence. But the man seemed unaware of this little detail as he boomed on. "Since there are four of us, why not make a system based around the four of us?"

Merida had had enough. "Well, why don't you work that out without us? Come on, guys." Hiccup relaxed his shoulders from their hunched positions at the sides of his head in an attempt to save his hearing and gave her a grateful smile, hurrying out of what Godric had dubbed the Great Hall. The others soon followed.

Jack laid a casual hand on his staff and hovered a few inches above the ground. "Well, why don't we work on something while we wait for them to finish up?"

"Yeah," agreed the other blonde of the group. "Let's go twig hunting."

They practically ran for the door and the woods beyond, searching for the long straight twigs that would give Rapunzel and Merida the right to the skies and perhaps increase the reliability of Jack's flying tool.

Rapunzel pushed through some thicker underbrush and walked up to an oak tree. She searched the ground for the optimum length of twig. The instigator of the project had been none other than Jack himself.

"You know," he started off, "if there are going to be more of us, maybe we should work on finding something for me to teach."

"What do ya mean?" asked the only royal.

"Well, if we're going to teach, we should have something more solid to work with. Rapunzel's got her plant knowledge, Hiccup knows about animals, and you've got combat skills. But what would I teach?"

"How about flying?" Hiccup gestured towards his staff, then at his feet just a bare inch above the ground. "I don't think most would be keen on the idea of training dragons. Your staff might be a better way to get around."

Jack grinned. Hiccup winced. _Here it comes, _he thought. "So you finally admit my staff is better than Toothless for flight."

The girls rolled their eyes. Seriously, Jack was never going to let the subject die. Hiccup sighed. "No, I just said it might be better suited to a larger number of people."

But Jack wouldn't stop grinning. "So you are admitting that my staff is better for flying in most situations."

"No, Iâ€|Well, the whole thing is pointless if there's only one." That comment jerked Jack out of playful mode and into a more serious attitude.

"I can get Mom to make more staffs, but I don't know how the design would work. I mean, she was lucky with the shape."

Hiccup got out his notebook and started drawing the staff as he peppered the ice boy with questions about how shape affected flight. Two weeks later, he'd come up with the idea of using brooms for flying, since they had the needed shape of a long handle and something to hook your feet onto. Ever since then they'd been looking for straight branches for the handles and twigs for the tails in their spare time. They just needed Rowena to get with the project or teach Jack how to spell the handles, and they'd be in the air with more than one staff. Hiccup would finally have his best friend all to himself.

Rapunzel looked at the sizeable handful of straight, long twigs in her hand. A pretty good haul for less than fifteen minutes of work. She raced back to the entrance to the castle to wait for the others and compare bundles with the ever competitive Jack and Merida.

Ah, rivalry, how sweet it is. This takes place after a massive time skip, and I hope the story gave that impression. Hogwarts is now coming along nicely. How did you like the broomstick idea?

Review, PM, and check out my other stuff.

18. What Were You Thinking!

"Where did you get this blasted plan?" Godric sighed. Merida, it seemed, was channeling her mother. "Splitting people up based on a few things about their personalities? What kind of-"

"Idea is that?" Hiccup practically shouted in his father's face. "What if someone has characteristics from more than one house? I could be in three of the four-"

"houses you came up with!" Helga cowered beneath her daughter's gaze, usually so sweet. "Hiccup could go in Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, or Hufflepuff! I could be the same! And why would you name-"

"The houses after yourselves in the first place?" Jack rose a few feet in his indignation so that he towered over his mother. "Do you know how bigheaded that makes you look? And what's with the-"

"Qualities you picked?" Merida continued to rage in the entryway right outside the Great Hall. "A whole house full of people who are just brave? That's just asking for someone to get hurt doing something stupid. I could have died on my first test flight if Jack didn't have the cool head to send Hiccup up after me. What if they'd just been brave and not smart too?"

"And what about your house? How do you think people who are only out for themselves will treat each other?" Hiccup glowered at his father.

But Salazar wouldn't listen to this. "Don't you take that tone with me! This is for your own good!"

"No this isn't!" The younger flung out his arms to take in all of the courtroom adjacent to the Great Hall. "This castle, this sanctuary is for me! But this system of houses, of rivalry, this isn't for me, or even for the other possible students. You created this to get back at Godric because while you were running, he was sitting back as acting king. You're putting all the potential cheats in one house!"

Hiccup took another step towards his father and knocked him back into one of the benches, forcing the man to sit. "Anyone in Slytherin is going to use the others for their own gain! There'll be no friendships, no real relationships. People will help each other because they want something, not out of kindness. You put those people into Hufflepuff. No one in that house will turn out well, _because _they are in that house."

"But no one would want to be in your house." Rapunzel muttered just loud enough for her mother to hear as she paced around in the ante chamber just off from the Great Hall.

Helga drew back as if she'd been struck. "Excuse me? What's wrong with being kind?"

"Nothing," and a little flash of her sweet daughter came back before she disappeared again. Really, what had those boys been doing to her poor daughter? "It's just not veryâ€¦flashy. I mean," she continued after seeing the confusion on her mother's face, "Brave, smart, those are things everyone wants to be. And despite the fact that being a hard worker and generally nice makes life happier and forms better friendships, people want something that's going to get them noticed. Everyone's going to say we're just the leftovers or something."

"But we won't be!" Sputtered out the elder of the two women.

"Yes, but they'll think that, and because of that, they'll look down on us, maybe even the teachers if things get bad enough. And we won't really change because we don't take risks or want to accomplish somethingâ€|or even have the curiosity. Those people all go into the other places."

"What good does it do to have a house full of people with only curiosity?" Asked Jack as he wove in and out of the staircase. When he noticed Rowena wasn't paying attention, he swooped down and grabbed her wrist. "Listen! They'll all turn out like you, getting knowledge just for the sake of knowing. They won't take the biggest risks, like a Gryffindor might, or know what to do with the information, like a Slytherin. And there'll be no one to tell them when to stop." He let a flurry form in his hand. "You didn't stop and look what happened."

Rowena evaded his gaze. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"I read your journal." He spat out the words. "You did experiments on yourself while you were pregnant with me, just to see what would happen, and as a result I can't get warm. It's not just the powers, I'm always freezing. And a lot of kids from Ravenclaw will turn out the same because they don't have a Hufflepuff to stop them when they go too far." But when he saw that she'd stopped listening, he flew out the window and over the courtyard.

He looked down and saw Hiccup's dad retreating back inside the building, leaving the boy outside alone. Jack descended and hovered next to him. "Let me guess. Arguing about their new system?" he asked the grounded teen.

"Yep." He shook his head. "You know, with us for kids, you wouldn't think they'd come up with something that stupid."

"Tell me about it," added Rapunzel from a doorway. She started walking towards them. "The worst part is that none of them will listen."

"You got that right," piped up Merida from behind them, making the two boys jump. She smirked for a moment before her face fell back into a serious expression. "I pity the other students. They won't get the chance to be like us."

"What do you mean?" asked Hiccup.

"I mean, that they'll only know the people like them. There'll never be a Slytherin who works together with a Ravenclaw to try something out, with a Gryffindor to push them forward and a Hufflepuff to keep them grounded. I mean, just look at us!" She grabbed them all in a hug.

She ruffled Jack's already tousled hair. "Jack was the one who came up with the starting idea, more flying things. But he didn't know how to do it."

Rapunzel nodded. "That's why he needed Hiccup to use his knowledge about what made the staff work and come up with something that could work just as well."

"But we needed someone to dare to test it and not let us lose momentum," Jack thought out loud. "That's why we needed Merida!" He threw up his hands in triumph.

"And of course," Hiccup pondered, "We needed Rapunzel to keep things running smoothly and keep double checking things and retesting so we could be certain it would work. She was even the one to suggest using Toothless as a safety net." But then his enlightened face fell. "And now, with their system, that's not even possible." The group slumped into each other, defeated by their own parents' needs to show off to each other.

****This was the chapter that spawned the whole story. This is my rant about Hogwarts, so if it doesn't sound quite in character, it's because they're basically saying what I've wanted too all along. Do you agree with me? Or Not? Tell me!****

****I'm trying to decide whether to finish with just twenty-one chapters or to go further. I just want to name the castle and give some explanation for the Chamber of Secrets and then be done with this. But, if you would like to see more, tell me.****

****Review!****

19. Going Up

Hiccup was the first to come out of his slump over his father's stupidity. "Guys?"

Merida raised her head. "Yeah?"

"Do you want to see the towers?"

Jack hopped up off his bench. "Yes! Come on, let's go!"

But just as he started to take off, Rapunzel grabbed the tail end of the crook. "Let's all walk this time, Jack. Besides, the only one who knows where they are is Hiccup and he doesn't have Toothless around right now." It was true. Salazar wouldn't let the dragon anywhere near the increasingly massive structure for fear he would break it somehow.

Jack drifted back to the ground and gestured towards the door. "Well then, Oh Great Architect, lead the way." Hiccup laughed at the mocking moniker and headed for the door that led to the seemingly endless network of staircases.

The two girls paused in the room, looking up at the stairways that seemed to go on forever. Merida whispered, "How did he manage to build this without the wall falling over?"

Hiccup laughed from his place at the foot of the first staircase. "Took me a few times to get the designs right, but the actual building was very easy." He got off the steps and walked over to a portion of the wall, motioning for them to follow. Jack did so reluctantly, the girls in slight awe. "This is Gronkle rock." he pointed at a smooth section of rock. "Gronkles are a type of dragon that chew rock and spit them out as molten lava. I just take that

lava and shape it into what I need. It made finding the right materials for the walls very easy. And some of the room was already built."

He dragged them over to the other side of the room to a section of wall just to the right of the first staircase. The stone looked visibly older and more worn. "This is a section of the original ruins. I reinforced the stone with some iron and new stone so it'll hold up. But we actually had a lot of this to work with all over the castle. The whole foundation was already built, including the dungeons."

"Dungeons?" Jack's eyes flew wide open. "Man, you are totally showing us those next."

Hiccup grinned and gestured back towards the stairs. "Maybe, but let's check out the towers first."

Halfway up, they felt a tremor run through the floor. Rapunzel grabbed for a railing and asked, trembling slightly, "Hiccup?"

"It's not me," the boy answered, clinging to the opposite railing. Then the stairs gave a jolt and Hiccup saw a fine dust falling from the top of the stairs where it connected to the next floor. The stairs were collapsing. "Run for the top!" And he took off for the top.

Merida was the second to start running, the two others right on her heels. They caught up with the other boy about five steps away from the top and a second later, they were standing on the platform. Hiccup looked back at his stony creation. "I just finishedâ€|"

As they saw his eye widen, the others turned around and watched as the staircase they'd just run off of connected with a door on the other side of the room and the one leading to the next floor slid into place at their feet.

They looked at Hiccup. "A little warning next time," scowled the redhead.

The object of her displeasure threw up his hands to shield himself. "That wasn't me. I just built them, I didn't spell them."

Jack slapped his forehead with a resounding smack. "I know who did. My mom was in here before, and she just can't resist messing with stuff. I don't even want to see what she did to the rest of the castle."

"No, this is actually fine," speculated Hiccup, a smile growing on his face. "It's a cool addition, just as long as it doesn't hurt the buildings. Come on, hopefully this one doesn't move." The resumed their climb, half in fear of the stairs shaking beneath them and half hoping they would. But they made it to the top of the room without further incident with the stairs, although, when they looked down, they could see one of the stairs shifting.

Rapunzel looked at Hiccup. "We will be able to get back down, right?"

"Of course." He smiled reassuringly. "I designed this place. I can

get us back down." He looked away from his frightened friends and let his face fall. "I hope." And he trekked down the hallway towards what he'd labeled the star tower.

A few minutes later and they were fooling around as if they hadn't just been scared out of their skins. Jack was swooping around the halls with Rapunzel chasing after him, yelling about the low ceiling and banging into the walls. But the boy teen just laughed and swooped even closer to the top of the room, making her screech and Merida laugh while Hiccup lamented what such a crash would do to his beautiful walls. Finally, they reached the spiral staircase that led to the top of the tower and the brunette motioned for them to start climbing. With him in the lead, the gang spilled out onto the top of the tower and ran to check out the view.

It was breathtaking. Green forest spread lush and beautiful from one side of the castle and on the other, an enormous lake brushed the foot of the cliff where the castle rested, the other shore barely visible in the fog. To the right, between the fringe of forest and where the cliff relaxed into a beach of sand blended with grass, a green valley nestled. Hiccup pointed to it. "That's where the families will live."

"What?" asked Merida as she looked away from the cliff's sudden drop.

"There, that valley." He pointed again. "That's where the families of the students can live if they need a place."

"What's its name?" Asked the young Hufflepuff.

"It doesn't have one yet. The school doesn't either."

"Well, since our parents just keep acting like idiots, I think we should name it," said Merida.

And so the mystery of the towers is revealed, along with Jack's origins. I think I might have gone against canon, but I don't care.

I have decided to end this story with twenty-one chapters, because I've said what I intended to and don't want to drag things out. I did add a bit of a surprise ending, though.

Just wanted to add that my blog now has a post on fanfiction writing tips, dealing almost entirely with issues from this site. The link, if you want to take a look, is in my profile.

20. Hogwarts

"Well, using anything from the houses is out." Merida stated. "We don't need the students any more split up than they already are. It should be equal."

Rapunzel nodded. "Right. So, what do we need to stay away from? My mom used black, yellow, and badgers."

The redhead shrugged. "Then gold, red, and lions are out. How about you, Hiccup?"

"Green, silver and snakes are taken." He ran his hand over his eyes. "Why did Dad have to pick such an obvious animal?"

"Well my dad's just as bad," chimed in Merida. "Lions and courage go hand in hand, not to mention he wanted the 'king of beasts'." She put quotation marks around the last part, making the others laugh. "What did your mom take?" She asked the lightest haired teen.

"Blue, bronze, and eagles." He rolled his eyes. "Something about eagles being the smartest bird. Everyone knows that's ravens." They laughed again.

Hiccup walked from the door down to the stairs and sat on one of the battlements. "Well, then we--"

"What are you doing?" shrieked the blonde. She ran towards him and pulled him away from the edge. "What if you'd fallen?"

He gently took his hand back. "It's fine. I free fall off Toothless all the time. I know how to land, plus I'm wearing my flight suit. Besides, there's no wind. But back to the naming." He sat down, this time on the floor with his back to the battlements. "Does anyone have any ideas?"

"Well, we have a lot of animals as symbols for the school," Jack offered. "Why not have one in the name. Not one of the four, but still some sort of animal."

"I like that Idea!" Merida high-fived Jack. "But we should make it something ridiculous. The school's too serious by half!"

"How about dragon?" Hiccup looked at their disapproving faces. "What? It's a magical animal."

"But it's from your house, or at least pretty close," The blonde explained. "Besides, dragons are amazing, not funny. How about skunks?"

"Same problem," Jack added. "It's too close to badgers. How about peacocks? They're attention hogs, just like our parents."

The girls laughed, but Hiccup cut them off. "Wait. That's it!"

"What's it?" Asked Merida, rather miffed at being interrupted, even if it was only a laugh.

"Hogs!" The others gave the gangly boy their full attention. "It's not too close to anyone's house animal, and funny besides. I mean, a school named after a pig?" They all cracked up at the idea.

"That's a great idea, but I think it's a little too short," said the redhead after calming her giggles a bit. "We should add something else."

"Why not something just as funny?" asked Jack with a grin playing at the edges of his mouth.

"No, pigs are funny enough. We should add something more serious,"

contradicted Hiccup.

"Hmm." Rapunzel put her finger to her chin and looked down for a moment. The witch Hazel in the courtyard caught her eye, giving her an idea. "Why not put 'witch' or 'magic' in the name?"

"That's too risky." Merida replied. "What if someone who was afraid of magic heard us talking about it? They'd attack us, or at least try to find us. And I know the wards are great Hiccup," she assured as the teen rose to defend his work, "But we don't need to take risks like that. Still, it was a good idea, Rapunzel."

"We could sort of code it." They looked at Jack like he had two heads. "No, I'm serious. Why not put in something that makes people think of magic, but not enough to scare them?" They stopped staring at him and began to consider the idea.

Hiccup was the first to speak. "I like that. So, any ideas?"

"Witch Hazel," pitched in Rapunzel.

"Cauldrons and potions," added Jack.

"Warts," finished off Merida.

"Wait!" shouted Jack. "Say that again," he commanded, pointing at Merida.

"Warts."

The icy teen looked at the draconic one. "Hiccup, are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

The teen answered with a grin. "Hogwarts."

Rapunzel smiled. "School of Witchcraft and Wizardry."

* * *

><p>About twenty floors below the jubilant naming party, the adults were having another argument. "I don't see why not," Godric asked the company around the table. "We need all the forces we can get, and we're not going to get many from families that have a few generations of magic behind them. Look at that girl Merida found in the village, Ann. Her parents didn't have any magic, but she had plenty. So do we keep her out?"<p>

"Yes!" Salazar almost shouted back. "What if Ann goes to the school, goes back to her family and tells them about Hiccup or Rapunzel? We built this place so we wouldn't be hunted, and you want to bring our enemies inside the walls!" He banged his fist on the table. "Letting in those raised by parents without the curse of magic would put us all in jeopardy."

"I don't know, Salazar. Without new blood, where would new ideas come from?"

But Helga shouted the woman down. "That's all you ever think about! Your own son suffered for those same ideals!"

"What are you talking about," Bellowed Godric as he stood.

Helga pointed an accusatory finger at the woman. "She experimented on her own son! Where do you think Jack got his winter abilities from? No, I will not let you ruin the lives of the students here just because you want more theories to test." She stood as well, glowering at the woman. "You can experiment all you like in your own home, but keep this school and my daughter out of it!"

Godric put up his hands, shielding Rowena from the irate mother. "Now let's just calm down, lasses. I'm sure we can discuss this." The two women sat back down, although Helga did not stop glowering at the other woman. It was clear Salazar had been shaken by what had happened to Jack, as he edged away from the woman responsible. "Now I'm sure not all the students will be experimenters, Helga dear, and if they are, they'll be in Rowena's house far away from your daughter. And we can put, restrictions in place."

"Like what?" The Hufflepuff snapped at him.

"Like, they have to have a teacher there before they try anything, and we can have a healer in the school to take care of injuries and the like before they go too far," placated the big man.

Helga was sufficiently pacified by these remarks, but Salazar was far from pleased. "You still haven't addressed the issue of how we'll keep this a secret and protect ourselves if we let others inside the walls."

Godric waved him off. "They'll all be friends by the time they go home. No one wants to see their friends hurt."

But that was too much for the man. "My son lost his mother because a 'friend' found out about his gifts!" He looked to the women, hoping to see the same sort of reaction he'd gotten when Helga told the truth about Jack. Instead, Helga shook her head at him and Rowena wasn't looking at him at all, preferring to play with her hair. No.

He stood up from the table. "If you will not follow the original purpose of this building, which is to be a sanctuary for those with magic, then Hiccup and I have no place here. Goodbye." And he swept out of the room to tell his son the news.

To tell his son that this would be the last time he saw his friends again before they became a security risk.

This is the second to last chapter, folks. How did you like what the kids did to name the place? Hogwarts is a pretty ridiculous name.

**Please Review! **

21. Almost split

Hiccup was jolted awake by someone shaking his shoulders. "Get up," the shaker, his father, demanded. "We've got to leave."

"Leave?" Asked the still groggy teen. "Why?"

"Because," answered Salazar as he began packing supplies, "The others want to bring the children of non-magical people into the school, and their parents with them. Everyone will know about us."

That woke Hiccup up. "But this is supposed to be a safe place. Doesn't that defeat the purpose?"

"That's what I said," explained the elder of the two, "But Godric wants his army and managed to convince the others to see it his way. We'd be dead within days if we stayed. Now get up and pack!" He shoved one of Toothless' saddlebags into his son's arms and continued gathering things together.

Hiccup watched his frantic father and looked back down at the leather bag in his hands. "No."

The man turned and stared at his son, who had always listened, always been understanding. "What?"

" I don't think we should leave."

"Hiccup," he reached out and put his hands on his son's shoulders. "I know you want to stay with your friends, but if we do I will lose you the same way I lost your mother. We've had a good seven months here, but it's time to move on."

"But Dad," answered the youth, "This is our best chance at some sort of stability, probably our only chance. Please." He stared up at his father with the big green eyes that were all too much like his mother's. "I don't want to run anymore." Salazar stared into those eyes that reminded him so much of another pair and saw the courage that would have put him in Gryffindor. "I helped build this place. I know every inch of it. If they come for us, we can hide until they give up and then leave. We don't have to leave now, not while we still have a chance. I can even install safety measures inside the castle if I have to; it's not too late in the process to do that."

"Son, Godric wants to use you for war." Salazar squeezed his shoulders. "You would have blood on your hands."

"No I wouldn't." Hiccup smiled at his father, trying to reassure him. "I won't do anything I don't want to, and neither will Toothless. He can't make us do anything. Besides, if I stay, I can sabotage his efforts and keep the students from getting turned into an army. Don't you see?" He reached up and pulled his father's hands off his shoulders and into his own tight grip. "Now I have to stay, even more than I did before."

Salazar sighed. "When did you get so smart?"

Hiccup chuckled. "I guess I picked up a few things from the others."

"Alright, I'll let you stay, but I'll have to leave so Godric can't use me against you. What kind of precautions do you have in mind?" And Hiccup began telling him about this new kind of snake that Rowena had discovered and shown him and Jack.

History loves to twist and turn the pieces of fact until they become a more interesting story. No one likes to hear how the Brave Godric wanted to turn the students into child soldiers, so they conveniently forgot all about it. No one wanted to consider the hunts and the issue of trust that drove Salazar to protest the inclusion of what the magical world now knows as Muggleborns. So they painted a picture with a brave red and gold hero with the slinking, prejudiced snake of a villain.

No one remembered who planted the Witch Hazel trees, or created the underground kitchen that would later be filled with House Elves. The origin of the moving staircases remains a mystery, and the true minds behind the broomstick were never given due credit. And everyone forgot the four kids who, to this day, are the only successful combination of the four houses, since they were never split in the first place.

Line Break

In the back of the book, Hermione found a painting of four children. The one kneeling in front with her hands waving in front of her had red curls spilling everywhere, even catching in her red and gold scarf. Her smile made her blue eyes crinkle.

The other girl had one elbow perched on top of the other's head with loops of braid flopping down and mingling with the flaming lock of the one below. There were black ribbons woven through her hair, tied in a knot next to her ear. The other arm was stretched out, holding the end of the braid just below the ear of the boy standing next to them.

He had brown hair with red highlights and a robe with green lining and silver ribbon around the edges. With only half his attention on the supposed painter, he had a sketchbook in one hand and a quill in the other. Hermione wished the picture could move so she could see the boy's reaction when Rapunzel " that had to be her- tickled him.

It seemed the boy with the dark purple shirt with bronze buttons crouched on the other side of the two girls wanted to know too, as he kept half his attention focused on the end of the braid and the other half on the person drawing them. The white hair made him easy to identify, as did the look of mischief. That kid could have given the twins a run for their money.

"Hey, Hermione. What're you reading?" Asked Harry as he walked over to take a look.

"I found it in the library while I was looking for Nicolaus Flamel. It must have been put on the wrong shelf." She looked at Harry and gasped before bringing the book so close to her face she almost hit her nose.

"What is it," asked Harry, coming in for a closer look.

She looked from the picture to him face, then back to the picture again. The boy with the sketchbook had Harry's eyes. Wow, history really did get twisted sometimes. She calmed down and handed the book to Harry. "You should try it."

"Sure. I've finished the essays for today anyway." So he cracked the slim volume and began to read.

****That is the end of the main story. However, I will continue writing for this universe and posting the oneshots here. It will mostly be one of the four turning up somewhere in Hogwarts. They won't be students or teachers, but just people you didn't really think about when you were reading the books but who they probably needed all the same. First chapter coming very soon.****

22. The Enginneer

Harry finally got the last of the goo from that *Mimulus mimbletonia* when the train crashed to a stop. "What was that?"

Luna put down her magazine. "Nargles have probably gotten into the engine car. They love to infest stressed people."

Neville, on the other hand, was craning out the window and said, "Well, something's happened to the train." Harry joined him at the window. The engine was listing to one side, and he thought he spotted a broken wheel.

Then Luna pointed in the opposite direction. "Oh look!" They did, and saw something floating out of the sky.

At first they thought it was a dragon, but as it got closer they saw it was actually a person with the black leathery wings strapped to his back like some sort of flying contraption. Decreasing the speed and intensity of the flaps, the figure coasted down on his wings until he landed with a soft thump right outside their window. The figure looked over at the three students hanging out the window and the many others along the train. "If you wouldn't mind," he asked with a chuckle, "could you tell the rest of the students to get off the train? This might take a while." And the brownish redhead walked toward the off-kilter engine.

In a few minutes the students had exited the train and crowded together a little ways away from where the conductor was talking with the—well, no one was quite sure what to call him. Dragon man? Mechanic? A few of the girls suggested cutie, but the male population protested, probably because they agreed, but didn't want to look like sissies.

Finally, the discussion between the two men ended and the conductor walked over to the rather large crowd of students. "It's alright, a wheel or two's just a little loose. Not too serious, although we will get it fixed before going on. So please give the mechanic some space, although you are free to walk around until the repairs are finished. I will blow the whistle when we can resume travel."

The crowd of students drifted apart into their smaller groups. Ron looked like he wanted to come over and join them, but Hermione dragged him back over to a group of upset first years. Harry could hear his grumbling from the other side of the crowd. He turned around to comment to Neville, but found that the other boy had gone. He looked in the crowd for a moment, but couldn't find anyone. "Hey." He looked up at the shout. The mechanic was looking right at him. "Come over here for a second," the man asked.

The boy walked over to the sight of the repairs. With the back of the contraption open, Harry could see that the winged contraption had a huge storage compartment with a variety of tools inside. The engine had been jacked up and the loose wheels were on the ground while the man rummaged around in the winged case for something. "Aha!" He pulled out a massive wrench. How had that thing even fit in the small black container. "Here," the man said as he handed the wrench to Harry. "Hold that for a second."

Harry gripped the tool and looked over the man a bit closer. He wasn't that impressive, shorter than Snape and thin as a rake, but there was something likable about him. Harry also couldn't shake the feeling that he'd seen those green eyes somewhere before. "Excuse me, but have we met?"

The man looked up from his work. "Nope. I think I'd remember meeting you," he said, looking over the teen. _Great, _thought Harry. _Someone else who only knows my name. Or was it the paper articles this time?_ "What was your name again?" Harry blinked. What? "Pass me that wrench and hold this up." Harry gave the man the tool and threw his weight on the wheel the mechanic was currently adjusting. He watched the man, trying to puzzle out where he'd seen the man before.

After a few minutes, the man looked up from his work and smiled at the boy. "It's good. You can go back to your friends now." Harry glanced in the direction of the crowds of students and saw Hermione waving at him. Hiccup grinned as he saw the boy run off. Looked like the kid wasn't as lonely as he looked.

****This is the first chapter of what I call the "popping up" section. Hiccup, Rapunzel, Merida, and Jack show up in odd places at the school and through the different years. Light hearted, and you don't have to read them in order to enjoy. If you have ideas for chapters, please PM me.****

23. Whomping Willow Friend

Neville walked back from Herbology, his last class of the day, and headed in for an early dinner. He passed the Whomping Willow on the way. The poor thing's branches were bandaged and in slings. Neville looked around. Harry and the others had been held up by the new Defense Teacher, and most of the other students never got this close to the tree to begin with. He was alone.

With another glance over his shoulder, he walked up to the defensive species and one of the whip-like branches reached out to him. He stroked along the bark and scratched at one of the joints where a new twig was just coming through. The limb trembled slightly with pleasure and coiled around his finger, letting the tiny leaves slither over his skin. Something brushed him behind the ear and he reached back to stroke the slightly larger branch behind him. Slowly bringing his hand over his head, the branch followed the caresses and slid up Neville's arm to run the very tip of the branch across his nose. He swatted the plant away playfully and it ran a few twigs through his hair.

He'd discovered this side of the willow last year when he was by the

lake and saw a bird land on one of its branches. Instead of shaking the bird off, the tree let it perch for a moment before the bird brushed the branch with a wingtip and flew off again. A few experiments during his first year led to eventually getting close enough to touch the plant with his hands. He'd loved coming out here ever since, although he had to be careful about who saw him doing this. The older years had talked about Hagrid's interest and vast underestimations of dangerous animals, and he didn't want them to think he was the same way with plants. He had trouble making friends as it was.

"It likes you," a distinctly feminine voice called out. Neville whipped towards the voice and saw a seventh year girl sitting in the tree. He felt himself start to freeze up a little, because this was a very pretty girl. In fact, probably the prettiest he'd ever seen. She laughed and got out of the tree, the branches acting as footholds for her as she climbed down. He marveled how the twigs stayed clear of her hair; so long it was just asking to get stuck. And so incredibly blonde, too. He swallowed again.

She stepped onto the ground and he finally snapped out of it. "How did you do that?"

She looked back up at the tree. "Climb up?" Neville nodded. "I've been friends with this tree for a long time, though I don't get to see it very often anymore. I'm glad it has a new friend." She smiled at him again and he felt like he wanted to melt into the grass.

A twig flicked his ear. "Oww," He muttered, rubbing the stinging skin and glaring at the guilty piece of wood. The tree trembled in silent laughter. He looked back at the girl. "How'd you get it to like you?"

She shrugged. "I wasn't afraid, and treated it gently. It doesn't like when people abuse it, like your friends did."

He shrank into himself. "Sorry."

She put a hand on his shoulder and a tingle went all the way down to his shoes. "It's glad you're here now, though." He looked up straight into a smile. "I hope you come visit it again soon, even if it's a little mischievous with you." She shot the tree a glare and it trembled in laughter again. She rolled her eyes. "It was nice to meet you, Neville. But you should probably head in to dinner now." She pushed the boy back towards the castle entrance and watched him go. Perhaps this next generation wouldn't be as bad as the last one. They'd been far too brazenly reckless for her tastes, although Merida had loved the trio of boys. She gave her friend one last pat and headed towards the castle as well, drifting into one of the paintings.

Yes, I know it's short. But they're supposed to be short and sweet like that. Thanks for all the ideas! If you could give me a few for Jack, that would be great! I'm going to try to do him next.

End
file.